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VIVONIO;

OR,

THE HOUR OF RETRIBUTION.

A Romance.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

A YOUNG LADY.

Ask ye who hath done these deeds?

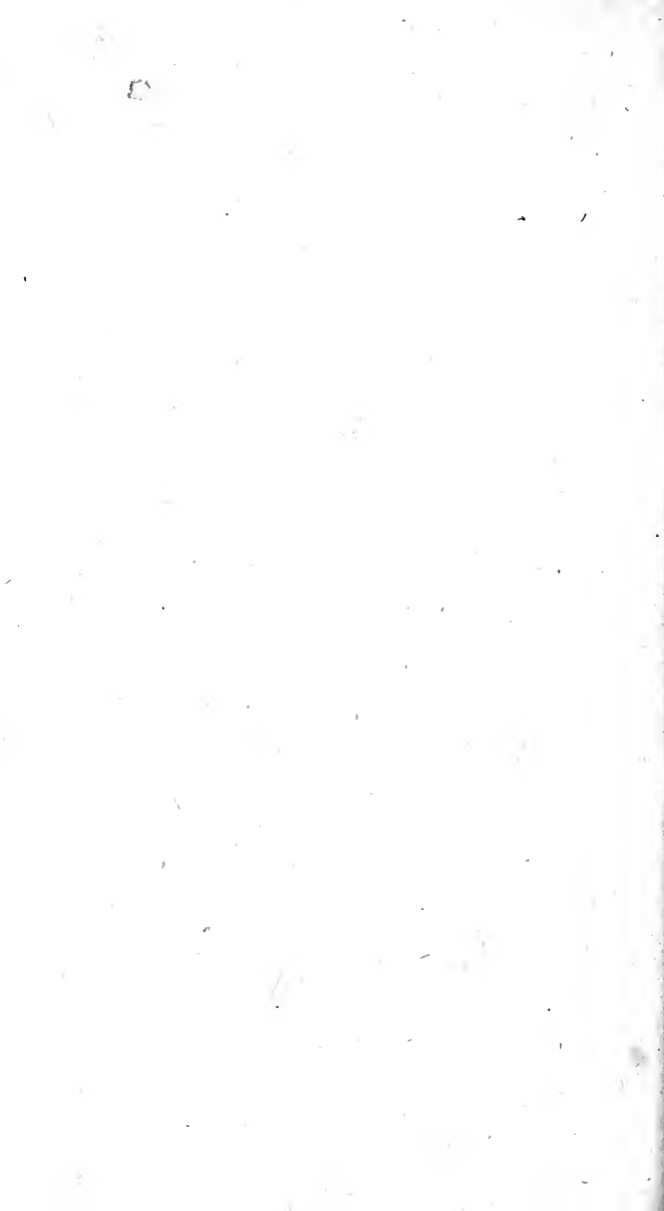
TASSO.

.. .. .
Even-handed Justice returns the poison'd chalice to our own lips.

SHAKESPEARE.

VOL. III.

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V I V O N I O.

CHAP. I.

AFTER travelling with great expedition, and being fortunate in their voyage, the Marchese and the Count landed at Cevitta Vecchia, from whence they immediately proceeded to Rome, where they remained several days.

The Marchese was received at the court of Saint Peter with all imaginable kindness and respect. Cardinal —— heard his singular relation with wonder and indignation,

dignation, and immediately undertook to forward every possible method for the discovery and apprehension of the inhuman enemies of Di Romanzini. The confession of the dying Lopez Vanilla, solemnly attested by Father Pedro, was copied and registered: and the Marchese quitted Rome, loaded with assurances of friendship and protection from the Pope.

It was at the close of day when the weary travellers approached Orenza. Joyful expectation thrilled through the bosoms of the Marchese and Guidoni, and each beheld the lofty towers of the castle with emotions, such as a parent and a lover only can conceive.

As the long train of attendants wound round the walls of the castle, joyful shouts burst from their lips, and in a few moments were answered by the domestics within.—Lights now appeared moving in many directions through the immense edifice, and the courts were soon filled with the rejoicing throng.

Foremost

Foremost came Vivonio and Rosalia.—The Marchese hastened to embrace his lovely children; alternately they were enfolded in his fond parental arms, while tears and half uttered exclamations of delight, spoke the exquisite feelings of their hearts.

At the entrance of the great hall stood the venerable Duke, supported by Father Albertini. The eyes of the former were fixed on the Marchese, with the most eager and enquiring look.

“Have we a son?” he faintly asked.—The Marchese replied in the affirmative, and presented Vivonio, who sunk on his knee before his venerable relative. The Duke leaned over him in an agony of joyful tenderness, and murmured a heartfelt blessing on the virtuous offspring of his Adelaide.

The Marchese stood impatient to receive this amiable son from the arms of the good Orenza; while Rosalia, gazing with tearful joy on the affecting scene, remained un-

conscious of being half supported by the Count Guidoni; who, marking her extreme emotion, had, with looks of mingled rapture and fear, ventured to extend his arm to prevent her from sinking to the ground. The placid smile of meek benevolence shone in the countenance of Albertini, as he alternately contemplated the overflowings of parental and filial love, and the artless and virtuous affection that sparkled in the eyes of the elegant and graceful Guidoni.

The Countess Alvanio and Josephine, unwilling to interrupt the feelings of the amiable family, remained at some distance, silent and delighted spectators of the interesting scene; until a glance from Rosalia at length invited their approach, and caused them to join the happy party.—Meanwhile the domestics, whose joy could not be long restrained, had burst into loud and reiterated shouts of rapture; and the spacious courts and arched halls of the castle as repeatedly echoed the joyous sounds.

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It was some time before composure was restored. At length, however, these loud demonstrations of happiness ceased; and the Marchese, his family, and guests, retired to the saloon. But the fatigue the Marchese had undergone in his late journey, and the excessive agitation his mind had been in, rendered it impossible for him to gratify the ardent wishes of the Duke, by relating to him the extraordinary detail given by the Abbot of San Jerome. The Count Guidoni, however, begged permission to repeat the recital; and the Marchese, whose feelings had been too deeply wounded by the subject, to allow him to reflect on it with composure, readily assented.

After the Marchese had retired to his apartment, whither he was attended by Vivonio, the Count began to relate the mysterious occurrences which had marked the loss and early years of the young Marchese.

The Count was frequently compelled to

pause in his narration ; his attentive auditors were filled with horror and astonishment ; and Rosalia, with terror and anguish, now learned that her lamented mother had fallen the victim of the secret and dreadful enemy that had torn her brother from his parental home.

Vivonio had returned from the chamber of the Marchese, at the commencement of the detail. He listened with earnest attention, till the Count came to the circumstance of Martini's reciting the letter, which he had asserted had been enclosed in another to the Marchese di Romanzini. Indignation now flashed from the expressive eyes of the youth. His mother, whose angel image had been so deeply impressed on his infant mind, seemed to stand in his view, demanding the chastisement of her vile calumniators ; and Vivonio, naturally mild and compassionate, felt all the agony of heated resentment, without knowing the aggressor, on whom he burned to inflict vengeance. The tears and distress of Rosalia,

Rosalia,

salia, alone recalled him to himself; and in striving to sooth her affliction, his own horror and passion gradually subsided.

Shocked, and almost distracted, at the consequences of his hasty communication, Guidoni in vain attempted to apologize. The faltering accents died on his lips; and neither the conciliating sweetness of Rosalia, nor the kind attentions of the Duke, could reconcile him to what he stiled a want of caution; though till that moment he had been unconscious that the lovely object of his fondest care had never before been made acquainted with the real cause of her lamented mother's death.

The dread of giving pain to others being ever the leading principle of Rosalia, she perceived that her sorrow distressed those around her, and therefore endeavoured to assume an air of composure, which being observed with pleasure, greatly contributed to restore the general tranquillity.

Guidoni proceeded with caution in his arduous task, but the conclusion by no

means satisfied the Duke, who had not entertained a doubt of hearing that the enemy of his house had been discovered ; and to understand the contrary, was no small disappointment.

The art and precaution, with which the base plot had been carried on for so many years, created the greatest amazement ; nor did the preservation of Vivonio's life, and the great sums expended to secure his residence in the convent, appear less singular. Conjectures, as to the author or authors of the vile transactions, were vague, and it could only be hoped that the authority of his Holiness the Pope, and the vigilant exertions of Cardinal —, would prove effectual in detecting and punishing the aggressors.

The Duke, after thanking the Count for undertaking the painful recital, spoke in the warmest terms of the filial attentions he had received from Vivonio, in the absence of the Marchese, and repeated the liveliest acknowledgements to Guidoni, as
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the author of the general felicity ; in which he was joined by the rest of the party.

Vivonio, who had been extremely embarrassed, by hearing his own conduct so flatteringly described by the Duke, was now all animation, while expressing his gratitude to him who had restored him to the bosom of his family.

Occupied by so many interesting subjects, and the observations they occasioned, the time flew unheeded, and the clock in the east-tower had proclaimed the hour of eleven before the party arose from table ; they immediately separated, and each retired to their respective apartments for the night.

On the following morning, every one assembled in the breakfast-room at an early hour. Happiness was pictured in every face ; Rosalia alone appeared rather pale, but that appearance was caused by those tears which the knowledge she had recently acquired, of the disastrous fate of the Marchesa, had occasioned to flow.

Full of the mournful subject, she had mentioned it to Biancha; and that well-meaning, but incautious, young woman, had fully informed her of the shocking circumstances that occasioned the death of the Marchesa; not perceiving the while, that her beloved lady was silently weeping the melancholy and premature end of her departed parent.

She ceased, however, the moment she observed the state into which her recital had thrown Rosalia, who, seated at some distance, had appeared seriously, but calmly attentive. A deep sigh that issued from her lips, alone informed Biancha of the distress she had occasioned.

In vain this truly faithful attendant attempted humbly to console her lady.—Biancha did not possess the softness and delicacy so requisite in those who would chase the sorrows of a sensible and feeling mind.

Rosalia soon dismissed her attendant; and at the foot of a small altar, devoutly supplicated

supplanted that consolation which no earthly power can bestow. Her mind became tranquillized, as her innocent lips poured forth pious aspirations for the immortal felicity of her regretted mother; and while she gratefully acknowledged the blessings she still possessed, she bent in humble resignation to the awful decree which had summoned the Marchesa, in the bloom of life, from the midst of earthly happiness, to eternal felicity in the abode of the blessed !

Tranquil serenity beamed in the eyes of Rosalia, as she entered the breakfast-room ; and whatever remains of sad remembrance might still lurk in her bosom, the fond endearments of her relatives, and the delicately tender solicitude, and respectful attentions, of Guidoni, could not fail to banish from her mind.

The Marchese, after some conversation, the subject of which related to the extraordinary communications revealed by the

Abbot of San Jerôme, displayed the contents of the casket. Several of the ancient female domestics, among whom was Lauretta, having been summoned on this occasion, immediately recognised the dress of the infant Vivonio ; Lauretta, in particular, affirmed it to be the same the child wore on the night he was conveyed away from the villa ; she also declared herself certain, that had Marina, the attendant then about his person, yet lived, she would have solemnly avouched the same.

As the testimony of these domestics was the last proof required to establish the identity of the heir to the title and immense estates of Orenza, and also those of Di Romanzini, the Duke and the Marchese received this confirmation of their hopes with a delight that spoke itself more eloquently than words could do. The domestics were dismissed with liberal presents, soon after the Marchese had signified his intention of celebrating the return of his son,

son, in the course of a few days ; preparations having already been made for the happy occasion.

Hilarity and mirth now reigned throughout the castle, and nothing was talked of but the restoration of Vivonio, and the approaching *fête*. Wherever the noble youth moved, the blessings of the domestics attended his steps. They beheld not in him a severe, a haughty, or a licentious, future Lord : his benevolence and humanity had already manifested themselves in numberless traits in his conduct ; and the aged inmates of the castle felt convinced that should they live to mourn the loss of the present beneficent possessors of Orenza, they should not be turned away from their beloved home : while the younger part of the household, early perceiving his love of rectitude and morality, quickly learned that their vices alone could incur reproofs. Yet with such exalted examples of piety and virtue as they had contemplated for years, there was but little
fear

fear of *their* falling into errors which their truly noble superiors utterly condemned.

The Marchese, with pleasure, beheld the ardent affection with which Rosalia had inspired the Count Guidoni, become every hour more and more apparent. Vivonio made the same observation; and using the privilege which their friendly intimacy allowed, he very frankly hinted his conjectures to the Count, who, though rather confused, was too ingenuous to deny the passion he felt: nor did he conceal his fears and apprehensions of Rosalia's regarding him with indifference.

Vivonio justly suspected the contrary; he did not, however, communicate his ideas on that subject to the Count; all he would venture, was to advise Guidoni to make immediate proposals to the Marchese: and had he not been well assured that the latter would receive such a proposal with pleasure, Vivonio would not have attempted to persuade the Count to take such a step.

Frequently had the Marchese, in the
hearing

hearing of his son, expatiated on the merits of Guidoni, and, not unfrequently, had he, at the same time, introduced the name of Rosalia, in a manner that led Vivonio to suppose his beloved father would not withhold his approbation to their union.

The Count, encouraged to hope by the persuasion of his friend, did not hesitate to take the first opportunity of applying to the Marchese for permission to address his lovely daughter; but the Marchese requiring a few days to consider on the subject, Guidoni was doomed to suffer the most agonizing suspense. During this interval, the Count almost shunned the society of Rosalia, nor could all the favourable representations of Vivonio induce him to hope that the Marchese would not reject his suit.

The day preceding that fixed on for the *fête*, was passed at the Convent of Santa Maria, where an elegant entertainment was given by the noble Abbess to her worthy

thy family, and at which the nuns were present. The table prepared for the Lady Abbess and the amiable sisterhood, was placed within the grating that ran across the apartment ; but though the persons of Santa Clara and her beloved relatives were thus separated, their hearts were in the most affectionate union ; and unrestrained and friendly conversation made each party insensible of the barrier that divided them.

The Count Guidoni, and several of the highly-approved friends of the Marchese, accompanied the family on this visit. The peculiar situation of Josephine not permitting her to be of this party, she was entertained with the nuns and boarders at the table of the Lady Abbess.

The Countess and Rosalia had visited Santa Clara on the preceding day, and acquainted her with every particular related by the Abbot of San Jerome, and as these particulars were now known to all present,
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the conversation repeatedly turned on the subject.

During the course of the day, the pensive melancholy of Guidoni was frequently apparent, in defiance of his utmost efforts to conceal it. Rosalia observed his dejected air, and having no suspicion of the cause, experienced the most painful anxiety; while the Marchese, remarking their mutual distress, inwardly reproached himself for having occasioned it; and impatiently looked forward to the moment he had already fixed on for its termination.

On the return of the party from the convent, the Marchese found a letter from the Padre Abbot of San Jerome, informing him, that after a strict search among the rocks, considerable treasure had been discovered in the valley, near the spot where Lopez Vanilla had expired. The Abbot then adverted to the wish expressed by the dying man, that the wealth should belong to the convent, for the purpose of procuring continual masses to be said for the repose of his

his soul. The Padre proceeded to say, he thought it proper to dispose of the treasure according to the earnest entreaties of the deceased: he then regretted that nothing had been found that might have elucidated the mystery which still enveloped the enemies of the Marchese; and concluded with earnest prayers for the felicity of his amiable pupil, and his noble family.

CHAP. II.

THE mild rays of the morning sun had just illumined the eastern horizon, when the joyful peal rang in the chapel of the castle, and the tones of sweetest music proclaimed the arrival of the festive day.

The valued friends and the long absent acquaintances of the Duke and Marchese, soon thronged the spacious halls. Elegance and profusion presided at the festal boards, and the taste and magnificence of the various decorations, displayed at once the refined judgment and the immense wealth of the illustrious owners of Orenza.

At slight distances, beneath the shade
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of the ancient groves, were placed separate tables, for the accommodation of the peasantry of the domain. These tables were served with profusion of viands and wines, from temporary pavillions, to which abundance of these articles had been brought, to be appropriated to the entertainment of those faithful dependants.

A pavillion of white marble, of exquisite architecture, stood on a gentle eminence, at the foot of which a broad rivulet rolled its clear current, over-shadowed by drooping willows. A space just in front of the pavillion admitted a full view of the river, and beyond its flowery banks, the rising uplands exhibited the varied tints of groves of rich myrtles and luxuriant vines; while mulberry and olive trees formed thick plantations on the swelling hills; beyond which the majestic Appennines reared their lofty summits, dark with forests of towering pines, that almost concealed long chains of rocks, the variegated colours and grotesque shapes of which,

which, represented to the eye a thousand fantastic images. The ruined tower—the arch—and the long line of fortification—appeared partially concealed by the pensile shrubs, and the waving branches of the ash and elm.

An extensive hall of white marble, open in front, and supported by pillars of the same, admitted this charming view. Wreaths of odoriferous flowers were twined around the pillars; and vases of alabaster, containing fragrant shrubs and flowers, were placed in recesses round three sides of the apartment. From the lofty roof, suspended by chains of gold, sparkled chandeliers of the purest crystal. Groves of orange and lemon trees, intermingled with flowering shrubs, partly surrounded the pavillion, slightly obscuring the marble balustrades that adorned the steps of the colonade.

Here the Marchese, and his numerous friends and acquaintance, partook of an elegant collation; prior to which, Vivonio
was

was introduced to the circle he was so eminently formed to grace.

When this ceremony had ended, Rosalia found herself partly surrounded by a group of elegant young females; amongst whom were those amiable companions she had so much esteemed at Santa Maria, some of whom were boarders, and the others, not having yet commenced their noviciate, had obtained the permission of the indulgent Abbess, to be present at the festive rejoicings at Orenza.

The repast being concluded, Rosalia arose, and her female friends again thronged around her; while earnestly attentive to the high commendations she heard bestowed on the graceful Vivonio, the Marchese advanced to the spot where they stood, and, to the extreme surprise of Rosalia and her companions, he took the hand of the former, and led her towards that part of the apartment where the Count Guidoni and her brother appeared engaged in conversation with the Duke.

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“This is a day of joy, my valued friends,” said the Marchese, addressing himself to the company. “I have already had the happiness of introducing to your notice one of my sons: permit me now to present to you another, equally amiable, to your attention. Count Guidoni,” continued the Marchese, after a pause, and turning to the astonished Count, while the assembly stood in mute attention, “to you I owe the recovery of my long lost, my beloved Vivonio. In what other manner can I assure you of the perfect gratitude I feel, and the high esteem in which I hold your virtues, than by wishing to address you by the name of son!—The hand of my dearest Rosalia will give me that claim. Accept her, as the best treasure I can bestow, and may your happiness equal your merits.”

Guidoni, overwhelmed with rapturous amazement, received from the Marchese the hand of the astonished, confused, and blushing Rosalia, who having never once suspected

suspected the intention of her father, had been totally unprepared for the circumstance which had now occurred.

The loud murmur of approbation that followed this action of the Marchese, spread through the lofty dome of the pavillion, and gave the amiable lovers an opportunity of recovering, in some slight degree, from the joyful confusion that agitated the bosom of each.

The pleasing intelligence of this intended union soon spread among the peasantry and the household; and the former had now additional cause for rejoicing, when they learned that these nuptials would encrease the happiness of their truly revered superiors.

Rosalia, almost overpowered by a sense of her own felicity, took refuge amongst her young companions from the ardent vows of her adoring Guidoni; but here a profusion of animated congratulations awaited her, and she eagerly caught at the first opportunity to escape to her own
apartment;

apartment; whither she was quickly followed by the Countess and Josephine.

With the sincere gratulations and affectionate attentions of these beloved friends, Rosalia appeared much affected: she recovered, however, gradually from her emotions, and when she accompanied the Countess to the marble hall, she seemed to have regained a considerable degree of composure.

Here the magnificence, splendour, and unbounded hospitality of those days, were displayed in a princely stile. Friendship and love presided at the sumptuous feast; hilarity never exceeded the bounds of chastened mirth; nor were the golden goblets once replenished by the hand of intemperance.

At length the approach of evening threw darkening shadows over the valleys. The groves of the castle now exhibited the most brilliant illuminations; while the pavilion of white marble presented to view a no less enchanting spectacle.—

Crystal lamps, arranged above the wreaths that entwined the pillars, emitted a radiant light on the surrounding foliage, while the tapers that blazed in the chandeliers threw a dazzling lustre over the interior of the hall. Here a group of elegant dancers displayed their airy forms and fascinating graces;—but Rosalia and Guidoni stood unrivalled. The exquisite beauty of her countenance, the symmetry and delicacy of her form, and the undescribable grace that accompanied her slightest motion, rendered her an object enchanting to behold: nor was Guidoni less remarkable for manly beauty, elegance of person, and dignified deportment, than Rosalia for her peculiar attractions.

The dress Rosalia had chosen for this festive occasion, was of light Italian silk, richly embroidered with silver; her shining tresses were confined by a band of diamonds; a diamond cestus encircled her waist; and her white arms were ornamented by bracelets of the same.

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The perfect symmetry of her beautiful figure was apparent in her graceful attitudes; yet the most refined delicacy was displayed in her attire, evincing the innocence and modesty of her spotless mind: while her superior loveliness attracted the general admiration of the male part of the assembly, and excited a no less degree of envy in the bosoms of some of the fairest females of Italy, whom her graceful unassuming manners nevertheless compelled to acknowledge her excellence.

The dances would not have been of long continuance, had it not been for the earnest entreaties of Vivonio. His monastic education having precluded his attainment of that delightful art, and for which his elegant figure was so well calculated, he was constrained to remain a spectator only. The noble guests, in compliment to him, proposed relinquishing their amusements—a procedure which Vivonio strongly, though

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politely,

politely, opposed, repeatedly asserting, that he should feel both embarrassed and distressed were such a measure to be pursued.

In consequence of these assertions, the dances were renewed, and followed, until interrupted by a general summons to the marble hall at the castle, where an elegant collation awaited the guests.

Soon after supper, the gardens were again filled. The Marchese, followed by most of the company, stopped at the edge of a spacious lawn, where the peasantry were busily employed by the merry dance.

The dancers ceased on the approach of the brilliant throng, preceded by the benevolent noble, at whose felicity they were rejoicing. At his mild command, however, they resumed their amusement, affording a pleasing variety; at the same time, those of the jocund throng, who were not so busily employed, repeatedly shouted, "Long live the noble family of Orenza!"

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The rejoicings, varied into a thousand different amusements, continued for several days ; at the end of which the company departed, extolling the magnificence and the virtues of their noble entertainers, and most of them full of impatience for the arrival of the day that was to unite Guidoni and his Rosalia.

CHAP. III.

A SERENE gaiety succeeded to the tumultuous festivity which had reigned throughout the castle. The Marchese contemplated the unity and virtues of his amiable family with emotions of devout gratitude, while the venerable Duke, whose bosom glowed with equally pious sentiments, appeared restored to his former health and spirits.

At the expiration of a month, the nuptials of Guidoni and Rosalia were to be celebrated. In the interval, the Marchese proposed to visit his ancient Castle Di Romanzini; and to gratify his dependants there,

there, by introducing his much-loved son to the domain of his forefathers.

The Duke's health being fully re-established, he resolved to accompany the party ; and preparations being accordingly made for the journey, the noble family, of which the Count Guidoni was now considered as a part, set out for the seat of Di Romanzini.

This ancient structure, which was situated within two or three leagues of Bojano, had never been visited by the Marchese, since the death of the Marchesa. The tenants were unoppressed and happy; they enjoyed many privileges, unknown to others in their rank of society; and their affection and gratitude were unbounded. Although they had, for years, regretted the absence of their Lord, yet as they were ever remembered by him, and as they knew that deep affliction induced him to reside with the venerable parent of their lamented Lady, they did not repine; but contented themselves with demonstrating

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their regards, by being as careful of their Lord's interests, as he, though absent, had ever shewn himself attentive to theirs. The castle, therefore, was not in the neglected state the Marchese had supposed it to be; the few domestics that resided there having permitted the peasantry to assist in keeping it aired, and in good repair.

How true it is, that condescension and affability interests the warm affections of the poor—an observation, the truth of which was illustrated by the Marchese and family, on their arrival at the castle; to which the dependants, when apprized of this unexpected circumstance, flocked with one accord, and around, the walls, testified their joy at this visit, by loud acclamations and huzzas.

The Marchese and his son soon presented themselves to the view of this rustic assemblage; every individual of which appeared anxious to shew the love and reverence they felt for their Lord, while they regarded the elegant form and complacent looks

looks of Vivonio, with sentiments of admiration and delight; and as the aged crowded around him, each had some little anecdote to relate to the other, of the singular goodness of heart manifested by their respected young Lord, even in his infant days.

A rural festival was celebrated at Romanzini, which the Marchese and his family did not disdain to honour with their presence, to the inexpressible joy of those for whose entertainment it was designed.

After having adjusted some matters relative to the further ease and comfort of his dependants, and distributed pecuniary relief to the indigent, rewarded the industrious, and stimulated, by promises of future favour, the less provident to follow their example, the Marchese and family departed, amidst the blessings of the grateful throng.

On the return of this happy party to Orenza, they were extremely surprised to

find the Count Alvania and Ferdinand waiting their arrival.

The Countess expressed much pleasure at thus unexpectedly seeing her husband and son, while the Duke received his nephew with his wonted kindness; and the Marchese followed his example; then introduced Vivonio to the Count and Ferdinand; the former of whom warmly congratulated the Marchese on having recovered so amiable a son, and continued to lavish a profusion of compliments on Vivonio, who, in respect to the friend of his father, endeavoured to repress a sensation of disgust he could not avoid feeling at the enthusiastic encomiums bestowed on him by the Count.

Alvania appeared rather embarrassed at sight of Count Guidoni, to whom he took the first opportunity to apologize, for the error he had formerly committed.

“When I mentioned the long projected union to you, Count Guidoni,” continued Alvania,

Alvanio, "I flattered myself that my son adored his beautiful relative, and had also persuaded myself into a belief that she was no less tenderly attached to him. You will, therefore, pardon the uneasiness which such a communication doubtless occasioned you to feel. However," added the Count, "I am extremely rejoiced to hear that the lovely Rosalia is sensible of your merits, Count Guidoni; and, permit me to say, that my sincere good wishes will attend your nuptials."

Guidoni made a cold, but polite, reply. Alvanio immediately turned from him, and entered into conversation with Vivonio, whose friendship he solicited for his son.

Vivonio, who certainly regarded the Count Alvanio with indifference, had, prior to this intimated wish of the latter, felt himself highly prepossessed in favour of Ferdinand, with whom he had been discoursing, and whose sentiments, on several interesting topics, appeared to be perfectly congenial with his own: of course the

overture made by Alvanio met with a pleasing reception.

The warm affection, with which every individual had hitherto spoken of Ferdinand, had excited in Vivonio a wish of becoming acquainted with him, long before he appeared at the castle ; and the conversation they had now had, having heightened the good opinion which report had given birth to, in the breast of Vivonio, he became eager to convince the former of his friendship and esteem.

The Count Alvanio, who, on his arrival at the castle, had received only an imperfect account from some of the domestics, of the means by which Vivonio had been restored to his family, now requested to be indulged with a full detail of the circumstances that had produced so happy an event. The Countess, however, knowing that a renewal of this subject would distress the feelings of the Marchese, to whom the Count had directed his request, begged permission of the former to communicate

municate the singular relation herself. "As it is but natural," she continued, "that my Lord should be extremely desirous of hearing every particular of so mysterious an affair, and as the relating of which might occasion painful retrospects in the present company, I beg leave to propose withdrawing for the purpose, to another apartment."

To this proposition the Marchese politely objected, requesting that concern for his feelings, in particular, might not induce the Count and Countess to quit the saloon: the latter, however, persisting in her friendly motive, gave her hand to the Count, and motioning to Ferdinand to accompany them, they withdrew.

As the recital the Countess then gave was confined to leading circumstances only, the time so occupied was but short. When she had finished, the Count led her back to the saloon, whither Ferdinand followed.

In the face of the former, the traces of extreme agitation were strikingly visible; while

while animation and pleasure beamed from the eyes of the latter, who advanced to Vivonio, and with great sincerity congratulated him on his fortunate escape.

A few complimentary speeches, to the same effect, addressed to the Marchese and his son alternately proceeded from the lips of the Count Alvanio, who endeavoured to assume composure; but the ill success of these endeavours was visible to all around him. By degrees, however, his countenance appeared more tranquil, and he conversed with serious earnestness on the necessity of still using the most unwearied efforts, for the discovery of the base and secret enemy of the Marchese.

The latter listened with attention to the discourse of the Count, yet frequently felt himself very much embarrassed. The contents of the letter, recited by the vile Martini to the Abbot of San Jerome, had made a deep impression on the mind of Di Romanzini. He had reflected that there were circumstances mentioned in that letter,
which

which agreed but too well with those of Alvanio, at the time when the lovely Adelaide di Orenza became the Marchesa di Romanzini. The Marchese well knew that the Count had been rejected by Adelaide, and that he immediately afterwards withdrew from Italy.

The marriage of the Count in another country, the birth of his son, all exactly corresponded with the situation in which the writer had described himself to be ; and the Marchese could not now avoid feeling confused and uneasy, as he reflected on this singular similarity.

Not that he entertained the faintest idea injurious to the memory of his lamented Adelaide ; to have harboured a doubt of her purity, would have appeared to the generous Di Romanzini, a crime of the blackest dye : nor did he, in the slightest degree, suspect the Count of any concern in the vile affair ; on the contrary, he thought him greatly injured : it being evident that the long concealed enemy of

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his peace, well acquainted with the Count's partiality for the Lady Adelaide di Orenza, had, in order to disguise himself, artfully insinuated that an illicit connexion had existed between Alvania and Adelaide, which was renewed after her marriage with the Marchese. Although this villanous artifice, employed by his secret enemy, was obvious to Di Romanzini, and he entertained not the faintest doubt of its falsehood, yet he felt distant and embarrassed in the presence of the Count, and frequently appeared thoughtful and absent: from one of these reveries, however, he was suddenly roused, by Alvania's requesting to speak with him in private.

The Marchese suddenly bowed, and conducted the Count to another apartment.

"I am extremely sorry," said the Count, when they were seated, "that I am compelled, my dear Marchese, to intrude on your attention, but more particularly so, as the enquiry I am about to make will occasion you some emotion. The Countess

tess has just informed me, that you possess a copy of the singular letter which the wretch, called Martini, mentioned to the Abbot of San Jerome. May I request permission to peruse it?"

The Marchese, who had, by no means, expected such an application as this, was extremely surprised at the request; however, he immediately replied—

"I do not possess a copy taken from the infamous scrawl itself, Count; the Abbot never beheld the original: but the recital of Martini made so deep an impression on his mind, that the worthy Father, on quitting him, wrote down the heads of their interview; and this letter he particularly recorded. I will step myself to my cabinet, for this curious paper," added the Marchese, rising; then hastily quitted the apartment.

In a few moments, the Marchese returned.

"This contains the particulars, reserved from memory by the Abbot," said the Marchese,

Marchese, presenting a scroll to the Count, who opened and read the contents with profound attention.

When he had finished the perusal, the Count stood for some minutes silently ruminating. Again he earnestly perused the paper; he attempted to speak, coloured excessively, and then became pale as death. The Marchese gazed on him in wonder.

“I perceive you observe my emotion, my friend,” said the Count, in faltering accents; “this vile fabrication has, indeed, given me the keenest inquietude. Do you not perceive the perfect similitude of my situation at the time of your marriage, to that of the lover, imagined to have dictated this infamous scrawl? I am so sensible of the resemblance,” continued the Count, “still greatly agitated, that I am convinced the detestable contrivers of the abominable plan, having gained intimation of my presumptuous addresses to the angel Adelaide, availed themselves of that knowledge,

ledge,

ledge, and by artfully combining truth and falsehood, have endeavoured to calumniate the memory of the most virtuous of her sex, to ensure the success of their horrible plot. What fiend-like devices!" added the Count, while indignation fired his breast; "who but the vilest, the most reprobate of wretches, would have engaged in such a scheme? Not content with injuring you, they have, by implication, attempted to stigmatise my character; but in that respect their arts are of no avail; it being well known that from the hour of my arrival in Spain, I constantly resided there, until the final departure of myself and family for Italy. That villain, Spignola—how is it possible he could have thus long eluded your researches?"

The Marchese, who had observed the Count with strict attention, now requested him to recollect that the persons of the strangers, as described by the Abbot and Vivonio, bore no resemblance to Spignola.

"Most true," replied Alvanio; "but
then,

then, whom else can we suspect?—Do you imagine he would ever have sent you that horrid billet, which you received a few months after the loss of your son, had he not been the contriver of your misery?—The sudden flight of his servant, Sebastian, confirmed his villany. That billet, containing an assurance of your son's death, was only to delude you with a falsehood, on which it might have been hoped you would depend, and cease your exertions for the recovery of your child.”

“ But that view was not answered, Count,” returned the Marchese; “ the most vigilant measures being afterwards pursued to trace and detect the author of my calamities, on the success of which depended the restoration of my son, supposing he then lived. Hitherto it has been the will of Heaven, that the base wretch or wretches should remain undiscovered: and while I bend in submission to the immutable decree, my heart is lifted up by devout gratitude, to the Almighty Power

Power that rescued my son from the malice of our designing foes. Had Vivonio continued under my protection, could his mind have been more richly stored? Could he have grown up more worthy of my fond regard, than he is at present? I will now ingenuously confess to you, Count," continued the Marchese, after pausing a while, "that I was forcibly struck with the similarity your circumstances bore to those represented by the writer of the letter.—The artifice, however, is plain, and perfectly consistent with the rest of the plan. It was necessary, in order to make the Superior subservient to the purpose in view, to impose on him in no common manner. The whole plot appears an artful chain of mingled truth and falsehood; some of the links are yet unbroken: but the devices of the wicked are even so unstaple, that a moment may serve to derange and overthrow the labour of years. I have, at present, the most powerful and secret agents steadily and indefatigably employed in my service; and,

and, under Heaven, I trust their exertions will prove successful."

"Then, my friend," said the Count, "you do not, I flatter myself, regard me with less esteem, because a secret assassin dared to intimate a guilt which I abhor the idea of, and——"

"Do not give yourself the least concern on this subject," interrupted the Marchese; "rest assured I ever entertained too exalted an idea of my Adelaide, to afford any attention to the odious calumny; but were it possible I could be so weak, so unjust, as to sully her memory with the faintest doubt of her purity, your long continued abode in Spain, Count, would have excluded you from a share in my suspicions."

Very little more being said on the foregoing subjects, the Marchese and Count soon returned to the saloon.

After this interview, the cool reserve with which Di Romanzini had felt disposed to treat the Count, entirely vanished, and friendship and gaiety animated every countenance

countenance throughout the castle, except that of Ferdinand, whose features were frequently clouded with melancholy. To his extreme regret, he had perceived that Josephine was not an inmate of the castle; and having enquired her place of residence of the Countess, he was informed by that lady of her being at the Convent of Santa Maria, from whence the latter did not think it proper to remove her, during the stay of the Count Alvanio at Orenza.

Prevailed on by the urgent entreaties of Ferdinand, the Countess promised that he should accompany her on her next visit to the convent.

Guidoni and Vivonio, knowing that the Countess wished her Lord to remain unacquainted with whatever related to Josephine, until the affairs of Father Albertini were arranged, had neither of them mentioned her name in the hearing of the Count; consequently he knew nothing of her relationship to the good Father.

Ferdinand, however, early learned the
interesting

interesting intelligence; and with all the ardour of youthful hope, promised himself the accomplishment of all his wishes—a union with his beloved Josephine; and even ventured to hint his hopes to Albertini: but the Father severely checked his imprudence, and solemnly protested he should behold Josephine but once, until her birth could be publicly acknowledged. Even this interview, Albertini would have prohibited, had not the Countess previously entreated that she might be allowed to perform the promise she had, incautiously, given her son.

Albertini, who, since he had revealed himself to the family of the Marchese, no longer shunned the castle, on account of visitors being there, had no sooner quitted Ferdinand than he sought the Countess, whom he earnestly entreated never more to suffer interviews which might eventually prove fatal to the happiness of her own son, and that of his poor Josephine.

The hour impatiently expected by Ferdinand,

dinand, at length arrived, and the Countess reluctantly fulfilled her promise. The former again beheld Josephine; who, though rejoiced at sight of her lover, keenly felt the imprudence of indulging the sentiments of her heart, while the affairs of her revered father continued in a doubtful state. Influenced by this prudent consideration, and regardless of the interesting looks of Ferdinand, Josephine availed herself of the first opportunity that presented itself, to withdraw from the parlour: this effort, however, caused her many tears, which she strove to check, having been long accustomed to console herself with the certainty of having fulfilled her duty.

Ferdinand returned to the castle, dejected and sorrowful; nor could all the remonstrances, nor the friendly raileries, employed by Guidoni and Vivonio, effect an alteration in the pensive looks of their friend: that could alone be done by Father Albertini, who, moved by the passionate entreaties of his late pupil, ventured

to promise him that Josephine should be present at the nuptials of Guidoni and Rosalia. This assurance had the desired effect. Ferdinand, in the hope of conversing with the lovely object of his tenderest regards, at no very distant period, became again cheerful and composed.

It was the intention of the Marchese, after the celebration of the approaching union, to visit Naples; the pallazo of the Duke was accordingly ordered to be newly furnished, and in the most splendid stile, for the reception of the family; and an elegant villa, delightfully situated on the eastern side of the bay, was immediately purchased for an occasional residence.

Every day now appeared a year to the Marchese, who looked forward to the marriage of his lovely daughter, and the introduction of Vivonio to the gay circles of Naples, with unusual impatience.

In this scene of unbounded happiness, the desire of retribution slept, and the secret enemy of the Marchese was scarcely thought

thought of or mentioned. The venerable Duke, as he gazed on the lovely and amiable offsprings of his Adelaide, considered only the means of ensuring their happiness; and in the filial and endearing attentions of each, he almost forgot his former woes.

Rosalia, who beheld in her adoring Guidoni, not only the deserving object of her artless affection, but also the esteemed author of the felicity of her beloved family, repaid his tender solicitude with the most delicate and winning marks of perfect regard.

CHAP. IV.

ON the evening preceding the day appointed for the nuptials, a more than usual animation, and a more striking expression of happiness, were observed in the Duke di Orenza, and his gaiety was soon communicated to all around.

The lively allegro, and the tender strains of love, alternately resounded through the arched halls. When the happy party separated for the night, the Orenza family and the enraptured Guidoni, retired, indulging the most vivid hopes of enjoying years of encreasing felicity.

The apartments of Rosalia were situated
in

in the eastern tower, and communicated by a long gallery with the apartments of the Duke. Those of the Marchese were at the extremity of this gallery, from which an arched gothic door, of highly carved ebony, opened into the anti-chamber of Rosalia.

To approach the suite belonging to the latter, it was necessary to pass through the gallery; for the Duke and the Marchese, fearful that during the early years of his daughter, she might be torn from their arms in the same manner they had lost the young Vivonio, had carefully ordered every other entrance to her suite of rooms to be walled up. The apartments of the Marchese opened on the gallery, and also on a corridor that terminated in a broad flight of stairs, which led into a marble hall, the massy doors of which were never unclosed: it was therefore impossible for any person to enter the chambers of Rosalia without alarming the Duke and the Marchese; both of whom, whenever the

former was at the Castle, were generally attended by several domestics, who, during the stay of Rosalia, slept in the large chamber in the middle of the gallery. Since the return of Vivonio, these precautions had been omitted, and a large suite of apartments, that divided those of the Duke and the Marchese, had been elegantly arranged for the use of the former.

Rosalia, on retiring to her apartments this evening, was accompanied thither by the Countess and Josephine, the latter of whom had arrived some hours before, from the convent.

The Countess soon took her leave for the night; but Rosalia still detained her friend, with whom she sat conversing for a considerable time, during which neither observed how rapidly the minutes flew, till the deep-toned clock, over the eastern portal, proclaimed the first hour of morn, and reminded them of the lapse of time. Surprised at their own inattention, each instantly arose from her chair; and Josephine

phine, whose chamber formed one of the suite, having wished her amiable friend sound repose, retired.

Biancha, who always slept in a large closet, adjoining the chamber of her lady, had not long extinguished the light, and retired to rest, when she was awakened by Rosalia; who, half attired, stood by the side of the bed, and in a low and earnest tone, commanded her to rise, and also to observe a profound silence.

While the trembling attendant hurried on her clothes, Rosalia hastened to the chamber of Josephine, who, surprised at the visit, instantly started from her pillow, and enquired the cause of her friend's alarm?

"Arise this moment—I cannot now explain," returned Rosalia, in a faltering tone.

In a few minutes Josephine was dressed, and followed Rosalia into her own chamber, where the terrified Biancha stood trembling with fright.

"Hark!" whispered Rosalia. Josephine
D 4 listened;

listened ; and a faint sound, which resembled that of some person endeavouring to remove the lock of the ebony door of the anti-chamber, struck her ear. The sound ceased at intervals, and when renewed, it was with such caution, that it required mute and fixed attention to distinguish from what part of the chamber it proceeded.

“ Follow me,” said Rosalia, and immediately touched a spring, which appeared to be one of the fastenings of a large Venetian mirror, that was placed at a small distance from the ebony door ; and which she had no sooner applied her hand to, than a private door, which it now appeared the glass had concealed, flew open, and discovered the entrance of a dark passage. Rosalia, while softly repeating the words “ follow me,” entered first. Josephine and Biancha instantly pursued her steps, and after having fastened the concealed door on the inside, Rosalia led the way down the passage, at the extremity of which she opened another door, through which

which she passed into a spacious apartment, and having admitted her companion and attendant, she secured the latter door as carefully as she had done the first.

“This is the chamber of the Duke,” whispered Rosalia; “remain silent, till I awake my dear father—the least alarm might affect his health.”

Rosalia approached the canopied bed, which stood in a recess, and raised several steps above the floor. Over the wide chimney-piece was suspended a crystal lamp, the blaze of light issuing from which marked the outlines of the rich tapestry that adorned the room, and glancing between the unclosed velvet curtains, threw a bright beam on the face of the venerable Duke.

Rosalia softly drew open the curtain, and bending over her revered relative, she uttered in a low voice—“My dear father!”

Several times she repeated her words, but they produced no effect.

“How deep and calm is the sleep of my venerable parent,” said Rosalia, turning to

Josephine, who had just then advanced; "how unwilling I feel to disturb his rest," added the former; at the same moment gently taking the hand of the Duke, she found it was cold as marble.

A sensation of horror thrilled to the heart of Rosalia; she fixed her eyes on the countenance of the Duke, and beheld the pallid hue of death on his placid features! The shock was too much for Rosalia to support; she sunk senseless on the floor: and Biancha, who, ever attentive to her lady, had flown, though too late, to prevent her fall, made the apartments resound with her loud and piercing shrieks.

Fortunately, Josephine possessed the rare power of being calm and collected in the hour of alarm. Though greatly affected at the awful circumstance she now witnessed, and the consequent insensibility of Rosalia, she yet was sufficiently composed to notice the sound of steps in the gallery, and which, by their rapidity and lightness, seemed to be those of a person flying

flying with the utmost speed and caution. A suspicion now struck Josephine that the Duke had been assassinated ; but the easy position in which the body lay, and the smooth condition of the coverings of the bed, gave testimony of the contrary.

Amidst these alarming circumstances, Josephine continued her efforts to recover Rosalia, who at length opened her eyes ; and at the very moment when a violent scuffle was heard in the gallery, followed by a sound like that of some person falling on the floor. A deep groan immediately succeeded ; and in less than a minute, one of the heavy doors of the hall shut with violence.

The noise in the gallery seemed to restore Rosalia to animation ; and, regardless of the danger, she commanded Biancha to take down the lamp, and throw open the door of the chamber. These orders were fearfully obeyed ; another groan was now heard ; and Rosalia, pale, weak, and trembling, wildly rushed into the gallery, where

the first object that struck her sight was Vivonio, extended on the floor, and weltering in blood !

“ My brother ! ” faintly exclaimed Rosalia ; her senses again took wing, and in a death-like swoon, she sunk into the arms of Josephine.

The terrified Biancha flew to the door of the Marchese's chamber, where, with frantic vociferation, she called on her Lord and the domestics, alternately. The clamour she made roused the Marchese from a profound sleep ; he started up, and having thrown on his clothes in all haste, he opened the door, and demanded of the affrighted attendant the cause of the alarm ? At this instant a train of domestics, whom the loud cries of Biancha had drawn from their beds, rushed up the stairs, and followed their Lord, who, but half informed of his misfortunes, was flying to the spot where Vivonio lay.

No language can paint the horror, consternation, and despair, of the Marchese,

at the sight which now met his eye. Vivonio, though faint with loss of blood, yet retained his senses; but not all the asseverations he exerted his remaining strength to make, to engage the Marchese to believe his wounds were not mortal, could assuage the anguish of his wretched parent, who gazed on the bleeding form of his son, and that of the apparently lifeless Rosalia, alternately, with looks that expressed the internal agony of his soul.

While the affrighted attendants were flying about in search of restoratives which might effect the recovery of Rosalia, and sending off messengers to Benevento for medical assistance, an ancient domestic of the castle, who had formerly practised surgery, was permitted to examine the wounds of Vivonio, which he soon pronounced were not dangerous.

Just as the servant, who was rather skilful, had declared this consolatory opinion, the Count and Countess Alvanio entered the gallery. Nothing could exceed their
alarm

alarm and grief, on beholding the distressing scene. The Countess seemed almost distracted at the state of her beloved Rosalia; she assisted in conveying her to the anti-chamber of the Marchese's apartments; Vivonio, at the same time, being gently removed to the interior chamber of his father.

When the attendants had placed Vivonio on the bed of the Marchese, every means were used to restore the senses of Rosalia, but for a considerable time without effect; and when at length she appeared to revive, her wild looks, her incoherent lamentations for Vivonio and the Duke, added to the misery of the Marchese, who fearfully imagined the shock she had received had impaired her intellects.

With great difficulty, Rosalia was rendered rather more composed; but the frantic expressions she had uttered respecting the Duke, had struck the Marchese so forcibly, that, leaving her to the care of the Countess, he hastily withdrew, and proceeded.

proceeded towards the chamber of the deceased.

Josephine, who had observed the encreasing agitation of the Marchese, was struck with his sudden departure, and suspecting the occasion, immediately followed, in the hope of preparing him for the dreadful shock he would otherwise encounter, in finding the Duke no more.

The Marchese had just reached the door of the mournful chamber, when Josephine overtook him, and with tremulous earnestness entreated him not to enter.

The Marchese hesitated, and perceiving the agony of concern, so visible in the pale countenance of Josephine, enquired, while he dreaded her answer, her motive for detaining him?

Josephine, who had acted from the impulse of the moment, knew not how to reply; but the distress she evidently suffered supplied her want of words, and prepared the Marchese for new misfortune.

“There

“There has been more murder!” exclaimed he; in a hollow voice; and, unmindful of the entreaties of Josephine, rushed into the apartment.

Having approached the bed, the Marchese threw open the curtains, and with trembling hand, raised the light he bore. The ashy paleness of the dead alone convinced him of the melancholy truth; while the mild serenity of the features, and the composed attitude, conveyed no idea of violence and murder.

“Poison, perhaps,” murmured the Marchese, in an inward tone of horror, as he contemplated the remains of the venerable Duke; and while thus mournfully occupied, the Count Alvania entered the chamber.

The amazement and horror of the latter, on discovering that the Duke was no more, appeared evident in his countenance; and in terms, expressive of deep concern, he questioned the Marchese respecting the dreadful circumstances that had occurred.

Di Romanzini heeded not the Count's enquiries: absorbed in the deepest grief, he continued to survey the corse of the Duke, then heaving a sigh, that seemed to rend his bosom, he slowly retired from the couch of death, and proceeded into the gallery, which now echoed with the voice of Guidoni and Ferdinand; each of which loudly summoned the domestics to assist in searching every part of the castle and grounds.

The Marchese, followed by the Count Alvania, proceeded to the apartments of the former, where they found Rosalia, tolerably composed, and tenderly bending over the couch of Vivonio, who was faintly endeavouring to hush the fears of his lovely sister.

The Marchese had scarcely entered, when Vivonio, with all the earnestness he had strength to employ, enquired for the Duke; and these enquiries rendered it evident to the former, that his son was still ignorant of the fate of his venerable grandfather.

“Compose

“Compose yourself, my dear Vivonio,” said the Marchese, “the Duke is not ill.”—But while he spoke, his pale countenance and disordered looks betrayed his inward feelings.

“Oh, my father,” cried Vivonio, as the Marchese turned aside to conceal his struggling emotions, “I am certain the Duke is dreadfully alarmed: hasten to him—assure him that his fears are without foundation. I am not materially hurt.”

The Marchese instantly left the room; not to go, as his son supposed, to the chamber of the Duke, but to make enquiry whether the surgeons and physicians had yet arrived; for whom Josephine had even in the first hurry dispatched messengers to Benevento; nor had she forgot to order them to summon Father Albertini to the castle, at the same time.

Finding that the persons he enquired for were not yet come, the Marchese returned to his Vivonio and Rosalia. To the questions of the former, relative to the Duke, the Marchese replied evasively, yet
in

in terms that precluded a suspicion of the melancholy event.

An hour had nearly elapsed, when the Count Guidoni and Ferdinand returned from the unsuccessful researches they had joined in making; the former no sooner heard of the wounded state of Vivonio, and the situation to which his adored Rosalia had been reduced, than, almost wild with his griefs, he implored permission of the Marchese, by whom he had been met at the door of the anti-chamber, to be admitted to the presence of each.

In vain the Marchese enquired of the Count where he had been?—whom he had pursued?—Guidoni could make no coherent reply; the former then turning to the scarcely less agitated Ferdinand for explanation, suffered the Count to enter the chamber where Vivonio and Rosalia were, together with the Countess, Josephine, and several attendants.

Ferdinand was on the point of replying to the questions of the Marchese, when the arrival

arrival of the medical men and of Father Albertini, was announced; the moment of explanation was now, of course, deferred.

Vivonio being now left with the Marchese, Albertini, and the surgeons, his wounds were re-examined and dressed, and the opinion given by the aged domestic, confirmed beyond a doubt. The operations being over, an opiate was administered to the patient, who, shortly after, was left to repose.

Meanwhile the Marchese, Father Albertini, and the surgeons, joined the anxious party, assembled in the anti-chamber, and soon allayed their fears, by repeated assertions of there being every reason to hope that Vivonio would quickly recover from the effects of the blow given him by the assassin.

The painful task of visiting the chamber of the deceased, for the purpose of ascertaining the occasion of his death, was next to be performed. The Marchese, having briefly stated the circumstance, and his suspicions,

suspicious, to Albertini, was accompanied by the latter, and the medical practitioners, to the apartments of the departed Duke.

After a strict examination of the body, the sorrow of the Marchese, and that of the mourning relatives and friends of the deceased, were somewhat alleviated by the solemn assertions of the physicians, to whom it appeared that the Duke's death had not been occasioned by poison, nor could it, they affirmed, be attributed to any other cause than the immediate visitation of Heaven. This being the decided opinion, the consideration of his years and infirmities rendered the sudden dissolution of the Duke no longer singular; the strange occurrences of the night had alone made his decease appear extraordinary.

Relieved from suspicion by this opinion, and freed from alarms for the life of Vivonio, the Marchese, having requested Albertini to conduct the strangers to some of the lower apartments, and also to order refreshments for them, returned to his own
apartments,

apartments, divided between parental anxiety, and eager impatience to hear Guidoni and Ferdinand account for their absence at the late crisis.

The anguish pictured on the fine features of the Count Guidoni, as he tenderly and fearfully gazed on the pale countenance of his adored Rosalia, prevented the Marchese applying to him for an explanation. Ferdinand was therefore requested to give an explicit account of his own and the Count's share in the transactions of the night.

Ferdinand immediately complied.

"I need not inform you, my Lord," said he, addressing the Marchese, "that my apartments adjoin those of the Count Guidoni. The clock had just struck twelve, when I heard the sound of quick light footsteps, and the voices of men conversing in low whispers in the wide passage, into which the door of my chamber opens, and which is terminated by the staircase

staircase leading into the hall of the south tower.

“Surprised at this circumstance, as I knew that none of the domestics occupied that part of the castle, I started up, and listened at the door of my apartment. The whispering had ceased, but I heard the faint echo of a closing door; determined to learn who these nocturnal wanderers were, I hastily dressed myself, and was on the point of quitting the room, when the Count Guidoni suddenly entered—

‘Ferdinand, my friend, awake!’ he whispered, in a quick and earnest tone.

‘I am ready,’ I replied.

‘Take a sword and follow me quickly,’ rejoined the Count; and immediately led the way down the broad staircase into the hall. The darkness of the night prevented our proceeding with speed. In a few minutes, however, we reached the principal entrance of the hall, the door of which was unlocked; the Count threw it open, and rushed forward. The star light was not sufficient

sufficient to pierce through the high elms that shaded the path, while the rustling of the closely-entwined shrubs and weeds, which impeded our progress, rendered it impossible to hear whether any foot-steps were preceding our own. At length a hoarse voice was distinctly heard; we paused in silent watchfulness.

‘I am afraid,’ said the voice, in an undertone, ‘it can’t be done to-night.’

‘We shall know that presently,’ replied another voice in a whisper, ‘All is ready, is it not?’

‘Yes, but by ——’

“At that instant a bright light, apparently distant, appeared visible for a moment.

‘It is all up, by Saint Mark. There!’ softly exclaimed the first voice, ‘that’s the signal.’

“Quick retreating steps were now heard. Guidoni and I pursued the same course they appeared to take, until we reached the banks of the river, into which some
person

person appeared suddenly to plunge.— Here we lost all traces of the villains; and after vainly beating around the thickets, returned to the castle, in order to procure assistance in our further researches. The lights we now observed moving in various directions, assured us that the alarm had become general; but as the words of the villains implied that their plot had failed, and hoping that the seizure of any of the accomplices might lead to the discovery so long and vainly sought after, we entered the castle only to summon the domestics, with several of whom we recommenced our pursuit.

“Guidoni, ardent and enterprising, again rushed forward, and as I immediately hastened after him, the confused domestics that accompanied us, either had not the courage or were too much alarmed to inform the Count of what had happened.

“In their eagerness to find the assassins, the domestics dispersed themselves through the plantations, but with no better success

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than we had; and the search was nearly over, when we learned, with horror, the dreadful circumstances that had occurred in the east gallery. The Count, almost wild at the intelligence, rushed into the castle, and appeared before you, as you must have observed, my Lord, incapable of answering your enquiries."

Ferdinand ceased.—The account he had given convinced the Marchese that the persevering malice of his concealed foe did not sleep. There could be no doubt but that the villain who stole into the east gallery, had mistaken the apartments of Rosalia for those of Vivonio; consequently believing him still in his chamber, the assassin knew not whom he encountered in the gallery. The Marchese considered the latter circumstance as the immediate interference of Heaven, since it was justly to be feared, had the villain known who opposed his retreat, he would have struck with a more unerring blow.

When it was understood that Vivonio
still

still continued in profound sleep, the Countess proposed to Rosalia to retire to her own apartment; but the gentle command of the Marchese was necessary, however, to induce her compliance; for though almost sinking beneath the effects of her terror and distress, she would have delayed, to console her revered parent, insensible to the weakness and indisposition of herself.

At length Rosalia withdrew, accompanied by the Countess and Josephine. While proceeding to her apartments, the former was followed by all the female domestics, each of whom respectfully entreated permission to watch in the outer room while she sought repose.

CHAP. V.

A FEW hours only had elapsed, when the principal inmates of the castle again assembled in the antichamber of the Marchese, who could not prevail on himself to quit the apartments while his beloved son should be compelled to remain there.

The languid looks of every one present, too plainly shewed that repose was not to be obtained in the immediate state of affairs. A faint degree of composure had, however, succeeded the late general alarm and terror; and being now greeted with the happy tidings of Vivonio's having just then awakened, with renovated strength and spirits, from

from a long and refreshing slumber, resignation to the late melancholy loss, and hope of future tranquillity, began to predominate.

The wounds of Vivonio being but slight, and unattended with the faintest symptom of fever, he was soon allowed to converse; and as he appeared solicitous to account to the Marchese for the blow he had received, his short detail was deferred only till that of Rosalia had been attended to.

Rosalia had already informed her father of her having been alarmed by a sound, evidently that of some person attempting to open the ebony door. This circumstance she now more fully related, and accounted for having been in the chamber of the Duke, by bringing to the recollection of the Marchese the secret passage which communicated with the apartments of the former; and which, from her earliest years, having been informed of, and being constantly reminded by her revered

grandfather, that in case she should ever meet with any cause of alarm, to seek that way to escape danger; she opened the concealed door, and having first alarmed Josephine and her own attendant, she had descended the dark passage, followed by both the former.

Rosalia had stated to the above effect when she stopped. The mournful scene she had beheld in the chamber of the late Duke, was still in her mental view: but had her feelings permitted her to describe the shock she had sustained there, the knowledge that her brother was yet unacquainted with the melancholy event, was sufficient to impose silence on her lips.—The extreme emotion that was now visible in her countenance, escaped not the observation of Vivonio; who, far from suspecting the real cause, regarded it as the effect only of her late terrors, augmented by a natural solicitude for the health of the Duke, who had been represented to him as confined by a slight indisposition, occasioned

occasioned by the alarming occurrences of the preceding night.

While Rosalia retired to a distant window, to conceal the starting tear—the only tribute she could now pay to the memory of a beloved relative, Vivonio commenced a relation of the particulars in which he had been concerned.

He informed the Marchese, that not being disposed to sleep, he had dismissed his attendant; and while amusing himself with an ancient legend, he had that day taken from the library, he was suddenly struck with piercing shrieks, which seemed to be those of a female: That catching up his sword, he flew towards the gallery, which he entered just as some person rushed by the door, but not so swiftly as to prevent his seizing the arm of the nocturnal intruder, who strove to disengage himself from the hold; but though he seemed possessed of uncommon strength, the exertion he made proved of no avail, until he had recourse to a weapon, which he plunged into

the left arm of his opponent, a blow which was instantly followed by another one in the bosom of the same ; the latter of which was as instantly retaliated by Vivonio, whose sword entered some part of the stranger's body. A dreadful execration from the lips of the latter succeeded this stroke, accompanied by a blow, which dashed his antagonist to the ground.

The unknown then fled with precipitation——

Vivonio was here interrupted by the Marchese, who asked, whether, in the voice of the stranger, he had recognised that of any person he knew?—Or did the tone resemble that in which the person spoke, whose discourse he had overheard at San Jerome?

“What he did utter,” replied Vivonio, “was in accents so low and muttering, that it was but barely possible to distinguish the purport. Could I have preserved the light I carried,” added he, “I should, undoubtedly, have caught a full view of the figure,

figure, but as I threw open the outer door, a sudden gust of wind unfortunately extinguished the taper."

The Marchese sighed at the disappointment he now experienced. He had hoped that Vivonio had obtained a sight of the person he had encountered—a circumstance that would have materially assisted the endeavours of the magistracy to trace out the implacable enemy of his peace, if not produce an almost immediate discovery: for to whom could he attribute the late attempt on his repose, but to the foe who had so long persevered in the malevolent intention of estranging his son for ever; and who, actuated by the same invariable hatred, had now strove, either to get him a second time into his power, or to sacrifice his life to his defeated malice?

The directions respecting the funeral obsequies having been committed to Father Albertini, he had already given orders for the mournful preparations to be made, in form suitable to the illustrious rank,

and the respect and reverence in which the memory of the deceased was held.

The Marchese, while contemplating the early part of the mournful arrangements, compared the sad reverse with the scene of joy he had expected this day to produce—this day, that was to have given him Guidoni for a son, was now employed in preparing to consign to the tomb the remains of an affectionate and beloved relative—of a nobleman less famed for his exalted station, than for those virtues which dignified his rank, and had rendered him a pattern for his equals, an example to his inferiors, and, in their effects, a general blessing.

During the time the body lay in state, Vivonio recovered so speedily of his wounds that further confinement was soon deemed unnecessary ; and as he appeared anxious to employ his first use of liberty in paying a visit to the Duke, it was now no longer possible to conceal the death of the latter.

The Marchese, therefore, with all the caution and tenderness requisite on the occasion,

occasion, revealed the melancholy truth to his son, who received the intelligence with deep sorrow ; but when solemnly assured that the sudden decease of the Duke had not been occasioned by the hand of an assassin, or by any other than natural means, Vivonio became more resigned ; and though he could not help mourning the loss of so valued a relative, he endeavoured to submit to the will of Heaven.

The grief of Rosalia was deep and heartfelt ; the idea of the Duke had mingled with her earliest joys ; the tender affection, the indulgent regard, he had ever shewn her, were indelibly impressed on her sensible mind ; and while convinced how unavailing her sorrow was, she could not restrain her tears of filial regret.

The remains of the Duke were at length deposited in the family vault, underneath the chapel belonging to the castle ; and in place of the brilliant nuptial preparations, appeared the black and solemn insignia of death.

The day after the funeral, the Count Alvania was suddenly summoned to Naples by the Viceroy ; and in less than a week after his arrival at that city, he was obliged to hasten to Madrid, on business relative to a large estate there, of which he was the owner.

The Count departed for Spain with so much haste, that he could bid adieu to the Countess and the Di Romanzini family, only by letter ; and in this letter he expressed such lively regret at being compelled to have recourse to that method of taking leave, that the apology was readily accepted, and the good wishes of all accompanied his departure.

The nuptials of the Count Guïdoni and Rosalia were now unavoidably postponed to a distant period. The Count, though he had need of all his philosophy to support the delay of a happiness, which, but a few days before, appeared nigh its completion, had too much religion and too much good sense to make the decrees of Heaven
the

the subject of murmur. To be still permitted to see Rosalia, to converse with her, to watch and guard her steps, formed the felicity of Guidoni's life ; while to soothe her filial griefs, to reconcile her to the loss she continued to lament, and to point out the blessings she still possessed, constituted themes in which his own feelings were ever interested, and which were always attended to by Rosalia, with that evident desire of subduing her own sorrows, rather than diminish the ease of others, and with that sweetness for which she was so much beloved and admired by all.

As the Marchese seemed to require all the tender and soothing attentions of his amiable son and lovely daughter, to console him for the loss he had sustained in the death of the venerable Di Orenza ; and to banish from his mind those harrowing apprehensions, which the recent, though unsuccessful, plot, devised against his peace, had forcibly revived—he trembled whenever Vivonio quitted his presence, and
never

never allowed him to move beyond the precincts of the castle, without a train of armed attendants.

At the pressing entreaty of the venerable Santa Clara, whose grief at the decease of her illustrious relation, was ameliorated by the devout hope of his having exchanged the transient pains and pleasures of this world, for joys of eternal duration, Rosalia was permitted to pass a few days at the convent; at the expiration of which she returned to the castle, where, as Vivonio, now Duke di Orenza, was perfectly recovered, tranquillity might once more have resumed dominion, had not the continual terrors of the Marchese communicated no small degree of inquietude to all around him.

Albertini, perceiving that the apprehensions which constantly preyed on the spirits of the Marchese were now rapidly undermining his health, and clouding with sorrow the youthful minds of his son and daughter, strove, by every means in his power, to dissipate the too just fears of Di Romanzini;

Romanzini; and, though his endeavours failed of the success he wished, the good Father so far calmed the terrors of the latter, that a journey to Naples was at length agreed on, and preparations accordingly made.

On the day previously fixed on for their departure, the Marchese and his family, accompanied by the Countess Alvanio, the Count Guidoni, and Ferdinand, set off for Naples; which having reached, the whole party proceeded to the Pallazo di Orenza.

The Marchese sighed as he entered a place which recalled to his mind moments of felicity never to return. Here the late Duke had bestowed on him the hand of the beauteous Adelaide di Orenza. Here he had esteemed himself the most fortunate, the most blest of men!—and here the bitterest pangs of unavailing grief had rent his heart. This pallazo was to have been also the scene of the lovely Rosalia's bridal festivity; it was now that of sorrowing regret, being no longer enlivened

livened by the cheering presence of its late highly-esteemed owner ; yet every one beheld with delight *his* virtues yet live in his youthful successor.

Change of scene, diversity of amusements, and variety of objects, gradually diminished the sorrow of the Marchese, and also relieved his mind from the harrowing forebodings of further misfortunes, which had nearly overwhelmed him, in the seclusion at Orenza.

The virtues, the calamities, and the injuries, sustained by this amiable family, rendered them more popular than even their exalted rank could have done ; and they scarcely ever appeared in public without receiving the most distinguished attentions, accompanied by every possible demonstration of the sincere wishes of all around them.

The misfortunes of her family proved a source of instruction to the timid Rosalia ; by them she had been taught the instability of earthly happiness, and in them she
had

had fearfully contemplated the direful effects of human depravity. In the society of Guidoni and her brother, her ideas became enlarged, and her mind expanded those energies which, early repressed by her secluded education, had lain dormant for want of culture. The timid fearfulness of the world, which Rosalia had, in some degree, imbibed, now gradually subsided, and she daily acquired a habit of making remarks, and reflecting on the various characters of those she associated with. In a large circle, it was impossible not to meet with many persons destitute of the virtues which adorned her own family; or distinguished the select and chosen friends of the Marchese. An high and false self-estimation, she observed, was, in general, the prominent feature in almost every defective character; and that principle, she soon discovered, was the foundation of a thousand vices and errors. But that which most amazed her was, to perceive that many of her acquaintance, who possessed
sense

sense to *feel* their own defects, should exert unceasing efforts to *appear* the exact reverse of what they really were, without once attempting to *conquer* the propensities to vice and folly, which only an attempt at an amiable exterior could wholly conceal.

When Rosalia first quitted the convent, her youth and inexperience rendered her unable to discriminate justly. Every pious, every benevolent, and every amiable sentiment, reigned in her artless bosom ; and the modest and feminine humility of her disposition, taught her to seek, in the judgment of others, a criterion for her own opinions : but near a year, passed in constant intercourse with the world, had learned her to correct that timid hesitation, which had caused her to fly, on trivial occasions, to the support of minds maturer than her own ; and though she had acquired a considerable share of self-dependence, it was untinged with that odious presuming confidence, so disgusting and contemptible in

in the manners of youth; and notwithstanding she formed just and acute opinions, yet she frequently submitted them to the judgment of those who had a right to her confidence; for though she excelled in the justness and propriety of her reasoning, she was still a *child* in *filial obedience*.

Rosalia often blushed as she recollected how seldom she had found herself capable of repressing any emotion, which, though not absolutely blameable, were certainly the effects of weakness: and she as frequently regretted, that at the time when her father's sorrows claimed all her attention, she had been prevented, by her own griefs and horrors, from administering consolation where it was so much wanted.—These reflections frequently occurring, Rosalia formed a resolution, which she afterwards constantly adhered to, namely, that of submitting with patience and resignation to whatever event might mark the remainder of her life.

The Count Guidoni, who beheld the
inestimable

inestimable qualities of her mind, and the beauties of her person, approaching to perfection, guarded her as the dearest treasure of his soul; and though too delicate to express the impatience he felt to become her legal protector, yet he could not wholly refrain from indicating a wish that the period, which was to crown his happiness, had arrived.

Meanwhile the Marchese observed that Vivonio, though daily in the society of the most lovely and accomplished females, remained apparently unattached to any one of the various beauties that were repeatedly within his view; and the Marchese began to experience no inconsiderable degree of uneasiness, at the indifference constantly manifested by his son; whose exalted rank, immense wealth, and acknowledged worth, rendered his alliance sought for by some of the most noble Neapolitan families.

The young Duke had too much discernment, not to quickly perceive that his
reversed

revered parent ardently wished to see him allied to one of the families he most esteemed: and could Vivonio have persuaded himself into but a slight degree of affection for any one of the several young ladies, who had been pointed out as deserving his serious attention, he would have felt the truest pleasure in yielding to the wish of the Marchese. —But Vivonio, while in monastic seclusion, had, of course, been devoid of opportunity to form his own opinion of female manners. He had heard some of the Fathers speak of the loss of a beloved wife; others of an amiable child—to each of whom had been attributed virtues which had endeared the memory of the deceased to the sorrowing heart of the husband, and to that of the mourning father; while others had mentioned the sex with keen asperity, and described the female heart as a compound of frailty, ingratitude, deceit, and boundless vanity.

On the introduction of Vivonio to his lovely sister, the Countess Alvanio, and

Josephine, the former opinion was immediately adopted by him, and his youthful fancy continued to represent, in the liveliest colours, all the soft and enchanting graces of virtuous female society.

A few months residence in Naples, however, convinced Vivonio that there were few who resembled those amiable beings, whose inestimable virtues had taught him to consider the sex with admiration and respect. An overbearing pride, a ridiculous affectation, a childish vanity, and, not unfrequently, a malevolent envy, obscured the attractions of some of the fairest females, and Vivonio often sighed, while seeking in vain, through the most brilliant circles, a mind which could equal Rosalia.

Ever watchful over, and attentive to, this beloved sister, the young Duke found his chief happiness consist in the society of Rosalia and Guidoni. In contemplating their felicity, he experienced the most sincere pleasure; and the day that was to unite his sister and his friend, was almost as
ardently

ardently wished for by him as by the Count.

After passing the winter in the gay and elegant circles of fashion in Naples, the Marchese and family retired to the new villa the former had purchased, prior to the period on which the nuptials of Guidoni and Rosalia were to have been celebrated; and which soon became a favourite residence. Here, with a select party, the Marchese again enjoyed the calm delights of social virtue and unfeigned friendship.

CHAP. VI.

AT length the rich glow of summer yielded to the varied colouring of autumn. The year of tedious delay had now nearly terminated, and a day was again fixed for the celebration of the marriage.

The Marchese, fearful that should the sacred ceremony be performed at Orenza, the recollection of the strange and mournful events that had occurred there, would throw a melancholy gloom on the festive day, determined that the union should be solemnized at Naples, and preparations were accordingly made at the palazzo di Orenza for the joyful occasion.

Extremely

Extremely attached to the serene solitude and enchanting prospects of his new villa, the Marchese lingered there with his family, purposing not to remove till within a few days of the one appointed for the nuptials.

The hours glided away, and the intending day of departure was approaching. A few evenings prior to the arrival of this period, the Count Guidoni received a message from the Marchese di Boisi, one of his most intimate friends, purporting that the Marchese having met with an accident, the consequences of which had been pronounced fatal, and that apprehending he had but a few hours to live, the Marchese entreated his friend to hasten to Naples, to receive his last adieu.

However reluctant Guidoni felt to quit Rosalia, yet it was impossible to deny the request of a dying friend. He interrogated the messenger, who, in answer to the enquiries of the former, had accounted for having delivered only a verbal message, by

again stating the dangerous state of the Marchese, and his total incapability of writing.

The Count vainly endeavoured to suppress the uneasiness which the summons gave him ; and though he prepared to depart, an ominous boding of evil caused him to linger.

Unaccountably dejected and sad, Rosalia sought to conceal, under an assumed appearance of serenity, the mournful sentiments which the approaching departure of the Count occasioned in her bosom. Fearful of deterring him by such weak apprehensions, from fulfilling his duty to his expiring friend, she exerted her utmost efforts to suppress the emotions that agitated her.

When the moment of separation could be no longer delayed, Guidoni became so extremely unhappy at the idea of leaving the villa, that he almost determined to send the messenger back to Naples, with an excuse for his non-attendance. The
sadness

sadness of Rosalia, though not apparent to the Marchese or Vivonio, had not escaped the penetrating eye of love; shocked, however, at the idea of Guidoni's refusing to visit a friend, represented to be at the point of death, she smiled away his reluctance; and having at length prevailed on him to depart, Guidoni quitted her, vowing that no power on earth should delay his return.

Neither the Marchese, nor the young Duke, entertained the slightest apprehension for the safety of the Count; and as Rosalia expressed no particular anxiety, her pensive air excited no concern in her friends, and the evening passed in apparent cheerfulness.

On the evening of the following day, the Duke, who now began to observe the ill-disguised sadness that oppressed the heart of his lovely sister, and hoping that the walk would amuse her, proposed a visit to their admired cliff.

The view from this cliff, which reared

its lofty head about half a mile from the villa, was extensive and delightful, commanding all the enchanting shores of the bay. A rustic bower, raised on the woody summit of the cliff, formed a charming retreat, in which Rosalia, Vivonio, and the Count, had often lingered for hours to gaze on the beautiful prospects it afforded.

Towards this delightful spot Rosalia now proceeded with her brother. The last rays of the setting sun appeared sinking beneath the western wave, as they ascended the rocks: and the fresh breeze chased the misty vapours of evening from the bosom of the deep, and swelling the white sails of the fishing-boats, bore them rapidly towards the darkening shores: yet the heavy depression which affected the heart of Rosalia, rendered her insensible to the beauties of the scene. Nevertheless she lingered in the bower till the radiant orb of night threw its silvery beams on the wide expanse of waters.

The Duke, without seeming to notice,
used

used every effort to dissipate her sorrow; and Rosalia, sensible of his motive, felt truly grateful to her beloved brother; who, deeply affected by her ill-concealed unhappiness, inwardly resolved to repair to Naples on the following morning, in order to hasten the return of the Count.

The approach of a domestic from the villa, warned the Duke that it was time to return thither; and taking the hand of his lovely sister, they both immediately arose to attend the summons of the Marchese.

Rosalia, leaning on the arm of Vivonio, slowly descended a winding path, which led down the cliff; the servant followed at a distance. Many parts of the rock, excavated by the beating waters, projected far over the waves; and Rosalia paused a while to listen to the hollow dashing of the surges, beneath the wooded precipices; nor perceived, till the Duke, uttering a loud exclamation of amazement and terror, clasped her in his arms, that they were

surrounded by a number of men, clad in Moorish habits!

In spite of the strong resistance made by the Duke, aided by that of the servant, who had flown to the spot, two of these barbarians seized, and forcibly held, Rosalia, while the rest of the Moors employed their strength with the Duke and the domestic, both of whom they soon overpowered, and bound to trees. Then mocking at the unavailing entreaties and threats of the agonized Vivonio, they quickly stifled the shrieks of Rosalia, and bore her down the cliff towards a small galley, which lay concealed beneath the overhanging rocks.

In vain she struggled to free herself from the rude grasp of the Moors. The cries of the Duke, his entreaties to be allowed to accompany his sister, and his loud calls for assistance, still echoed down the cliff. Rosalia alone regarded them; but her overwhelming distress, her supplicating tears, remained unheeded, and she was lifted on
board,

board, and conveyed into the cabin of the vessel, apparently lifeless.

On recovering her senses, the late dreadful events occurred to her recollection with encreasing horror and dismay. She gazed wildly around: the moon, transiently illuminating the cabin, discovered the superb manner in which it was furnished. The galley, swiftly gliding through the waters, was but slightly agitated; and the weeping captive moved her enfeebled steps to the window. The fast receding shores of Italy were, by the brilliant light of the moon, rendered visible to her view; and while, with anguish and horror, she surveyed the lessening prospects, she felt convinced, by the way the galley had already made, that all attempts at pursuit would be ineffectual.

“Oh, my father! my brother! my Guidoni!—Dear friends, beloved country! I shall never, never behold you more!” exclaimed the agonized Rosalia, while the cold chills of despair froze her heart.

In the torpor of irremediable wretchedness, Rosalia continued at the window till the dark outline of the Italian shores were lost in distance. Emotions, the most keen, now agitated her bosom. Tears flowed from her eyes, and in a short time relieved the heavy oppression of her heart. Her hope in the protection of the Most High revived; and she had regained some degree of patient submission to the will of Heaven, when the door of the cabin opened, and a female, in the habit of a Moorish slave, entered, followed by two men, one of whom bore lights, and the other refreshments. The woman arranged the repast, while the men withdrew in silence.

The attention of Rosalia was involuntarily engaged by the female slave; her dress plain, and of coarse materials, was strangely contrasted with her majestic figure and haughty air. She appeared to be above thirty, and to have been remarkably handsome. Her large dark eyes occasionally glanced on Rosalia, and

and the varying colour of her cheek betrayed agitation of mind. The fierceness of her look was, however, soon succeeded by an air of confusion and mildness; and at length she addressed Rosalia in Italian, and invited her to taste the repast.

The altered countenance and hesitating voice of the slave, inspired Rosalia with courage to enquire whither she was to be conveyed?

The slave answered not; but on Rosalia tremblingly repeating the question, she replied—

“Your endeavours to make me satisfy your enquiries, are unavailing. Compose yourself, lady: provided you submit to your destiny without repining, you may, in the end, be happier than you expect.—At all events, you have nothing to fear at present, as during the voyage you will behold only me. Suffer me, then, Signora, to advise you not to yield to vain regrets.”

She then again requested Rosalia to take

some refreshment ; but the hapless captive, overwhelmed with the horrors of her situation, attended not to her solicitations.

“ If, then, Signora, you are not disposed to take any refreshment,” said the slave, much agitated, “ shall I attend you to repose ? ”

Rosalia, anxious to be alone, assented ; upon which the slave threw open the door of a small inner cabin, richly furnished, and informed her that that was appropriated to her use.

Rosalia retired ; and the slave, lighting a silver lamp, placed it on a small stand ; then waited in silence her commands : but her further attendance being immediately declined, she withdrew.

Though reclined on the highly ornamented couch, she sought not the balmy influence of sleep. She shrunk, with grief and dismay, from the terrifying images her imagination too truly represented, of her beloved father's sufferings ; the anguish and despair of the Count Guidoni, the
agonies

agonies of her brother, the consternation and sorrow of her revered Santa Clara, and the Countess Alvanio, the tears of Josephine, and the lamentations of all the dear companions of her youth—all presented a picture too agonizing for contemplation ; and the reason of Rosalia was scarcely equal to the shock. The chills of despair again pervaded her frame, and she lay, cold and inanimate, until the rough voices of the crew, exchanging the orders of the night, and the loud trampling on the deck, restored her to recollection.

She now began to reflect on the singularity of the Moors' conduct, respecting her brother. Amidst all her terrors she had observed, that in resisting his efforts to effect her release, the barbarians had not once attempted to wound the Duke, nor had they even had recourse to their arms, when his loud and repeated outcries rung through the rocks, and exposed their horrible enterprize to the hazard of defeat. These circumstances now afforded some consolation

lation to the trembling Rosalia. Her brother, the beloved, the amiable Vivonio, still remained to console her father; and as her fate would be known to her friends, she began to indulge the cheering hope that ere she could arrive at any of the ports of Barbary, means might be used by her family to ransom her from captivity.

Calmed by these reflections, and shocked at the gloomy despair she had indulged, she addressed a fervent prayer to the Divine Disposer of her fate, and soon experienced that sustaining hope and devout confidence which are ever the effects of sincere piety; and which taught her to submit with resignation to the unhappiness of her present state, and to trust in Heaven for deliverance.

In the morning the door of the cabin was opened by the slave; she assisted Rosalia to rise; and then displayed to the view of the astonished captive, a profusion of elegant habits and rich ornaments.

“These, Signora,” said the slave, “are provided

provided for your convenience; and you will assuredly ensure your own safety, by using them without opposition."

Rosalia was too sensible of her situation not to feel how useless, if not dangerous, would be resistance. She therefore made an effort to submit with apparent calmness; yet made no reply.

Entering the great cabin, she found an elegant repast awaiting her appearance. To refuse sustenance, so necessary to the support of her health and strength, she now truly felt would be an unpardonable folly, which would expose her only the more certainly to the power of those into whose hands she had so unhappily fallen; she therefore mildly accepted the refreshments officiously offered her by the slave.

During the whole of the voyage, Rosalia had no cause for complaint in the treatment she received. Every elegance and comfort, which the nature of the situation would admit of, had been amply provided for her accommodation; and every hour she felt her

her

her astonishment encrease. She had heard that the fate of captives in a Moorish galley was melancholy in the extreme. How singular, then, did the manner in which she was treated appear! She saw no person but the slave, whose name she understood was Zellida; nor did there seem to be any other females than herself and this slave in the vessel. The Moors never entered the cabin—a circumstance grateful to Rosalia, who would have shuddered at the sight of these beings, whom she could not but regard with horror, as the authors of her sad captivity.

In vain she continued to reflect on her uncommon situation: from Zellida she could obtain no elucidation of the strange conduct observed towards herself, nor the least information with respect to which of the ports of Barbary the vessel was steering her course; she remained, therefore, as much in suspense, as to her own destination, as she was on her entrance into the galley.

One evening, as she sat absorbed in mournful reflection, she was suddenly roused from her reveries by the cry of "Land!"—Starting from her seat, she flew to the cabin window: as the galley tacked under a side gale, she perceived the still distant shore dark on the horizon. The windows were, however, speedily closed by Zellida. In all the anguish of despair, Rosalia once more enquired whither they were proceeding?—still she obtained no satisfactory answer. Land, she had heard, was in sight; and she now yielded to the dreadful idea that she was actually within a few leagues of the coast of Barbary, and that the vessel was destined either to Algiers or Tunis.

Several hours passed away, during which Rosalia suffered all the terrors of her situation. At length the galley came to an anchor: the Captain, for the first time, now entered the cabin. He appeared struck with the beauty and affliction of his
lovely

lovely captive; and turning to Zellida, uttered several words in the Moorisco tongue, while his gestures implied admiration.

Rosalia timidly gazed on the dark features of the Moor; they were expressive of violent and ungoverned passions: she shrunk from the idea of entreating his pity.

In a few minutes he quitted the cabin. Zellida then informed Rosalia that the boat, which was to convey them to the shore, was just ready; scarcely had she concluded the sentence, when the voice of the Captain was heard. Zellida instantly caught the trembling hand of Rosalia, and led her upon deck.

The first grey light of the dawn presented a faint view of an immense chain of dark wooded mountains; the summits of which, crowned with snow, towered above the flying mists. Rosalia threw a fearful glance around: the high cliffs, which partly enclosed the creek in which
the

the galley lay moored, overhung the dark waters, and added to the gloomy wildness of the more stupendous heights.

She turned away her tearful eyes from the dreaded shore, and cast a look of anguish and entreaty on the Moorish Captain. Vainly had she attempted to move the haughty Zellida to pity : as the last alternative, she now threw herself at the feet of the Moor, whom, in the most affecting terms, she supplicated for mercy and deliverance.

The Moor seemed to be softened by her tears, but speedily resuming his natural fierceness, he turned from her, and regardless of the agonies which she appeared to endure, he ordered her to be conveyed to the boat.

This command was immediately executed. Zellida hastened to accompany the almost lifeless captive, whose sufferings seemed to make no impression on the pitiless slave ; who, having seated herself in the boat, directed her discourse to the
rowers,

rowers, with whom she continued to talk and laugh.

Having landed, Zellida and one of the Moors assisted the hapless Rosalia to ascend a rough path-way cut in the steep rock.— Agonized as the feelings of the latter were, she had observed that the boat, after landing her and her two companions, had put off, with evident haste, from the shore.

Compelled, by fatigue, to stop on a high ascent, she perceived the galley under weigh; in a few moments, however, it was lost to her view, having sailed beyond the long range of rocks that nearly encircled the creek.

The companions of Rosalia now hurried her up the steep activity. The encreasing light rendering the surrounding objects more and more visible, she soon discerned the embattled towers of a castle, rising above the summit of the rocks, and shortly afterwards the roof of the edifice, and the high and massy walls which enclosed it.

Having reached the walls of this immense building,

building, the Moor departed. Rosalia was then silently conducted by Zellida through a low archway, the iron grating of which was open, into a small court belonging to the south tower, and from thence into a hall of black marble: having led her drooping charge through this hall into an adjoining apartment, the slave withdrew.

The violence of Rosalia's emotions had now subsided into a dreadful calm. The sad presages of her heart, whispered to her a series of approaching miseries. That she was in Barbary, she entertained no doubt; while it appeared equally certain, that her captors, instead of carrying her to Algiers or Tunis, had destined her to be the wretched victim of some powerful Moor, whose fortified castle, enveloped in the bosom of wild and almost inaccessible mountains, was but too well calculated to preclude all hope of escape, or possibility of her fate ever becoming known. Much more overwhelmed by this alarming idea, than exhausted by her sorrows, or wearied
with

with the fatigues of the voyage, she sat the image of woe and despair, when Zellida returned to the apartment.

All the importunities of the latter to engage Rosalia to taste of the refreshments she had now brought, were unavailing; until overcome by her repeated and pressing solicitations, she received from her hand a small quantity of wine, which she had taken only a few moments, when Zellida led her from the apartment into the black marble hall; the long narrow windows of which, she observed, were darkened by the shadowing ivy, and shattered in many places; the marble pillars that sustained the roof, appeared to be also in a state of decay; while the scattered fragments on the pavement, and the air of gloomy solitude which pervaded the whole, indicated long desertion.

Having crossed this hall, they ascended a flight of marble steps, and proceeded along a corridor, at the extremity of which a door opened into a suite of apartments,

ments, seemingly in excellent repair, and furnished in a magnificent stile.

“This suite is allotted to you, lady,” said Zellida, leading the way into the anti-chamber, through which she passed into a room more splendid than the former.—From this apartment she conducted Rosalia to a spacious sleeping-room, where she intimated she should leave her to take repose—a proposition Rosalia readily agreed to. A faint and heavy languor oppressed her frame, and she soon yielded to the influence of profound sleep, the effect of an opiate, which Zellida had secretly mixed with the wine she had prevailed on her to take.

CHAP. VII.

ON awaking from a long and heavy slumber, Rosalia perceived Zellida sitting near the bed. Her Moorish habit was now exchanged for a long black dress; this circumstance struck Rosalia with new surprise, and, after gazing on her awhile, she anxiously enquired the cause of the alteration?

Zellida smiled. "You will soon know, lady," she replied.

The significance which accompanied her look and words, terrified and deterred Rosalia from making any further enquiry.

From the hour in which she had first beheld

beheld this woman, she had been exceedingly averse to her attendance. The striking difference which appeared, at times, in her manners, alternately varying from undescribable mildness to haughty reserve, or cool indifference, had often surprised, and not less frequently alarmed, Rosalia, who had never once felt inclined, nor had she ever been taught, to seek for consolation from this mysterious attendant.

Having arose from the bed, she was conducted by Zellida into the adjoining apartment, where an elegant repast had just been served. This circumstance Rosalia observed in silence; for though restored to some degree of composure by the rest she had enjoyed, yet the anguish of her heart rendered her unable to taste of the refreshments which were provided for her use. The haughty attendant, finding that she continued to resist her repeated invitations, left the apartment.

Allured by the beauty of the evening, Rosalia advanced to the window, and threw
open

open the casement, to inhale the balmy gale that fluttered on the branches of the waving trees. That she had slept many hours, the sun, now fast declining in the west, declared. A sublime and extensive prospect here presented itself to her view : the south wing, in which the chambers she occupied were situated, was erected on a rock, higher than that on which the greater part of the castle stood, commanding the wooded cliffs, the ocean, and the dark forests, which clothed the sides of the lofty adjacent mountains. The massy walls, extending to the rocks which overhung the sea, were also visible from the window ; but no part of the edifice itself, except the south tower, could be seen there.

The contemplation of this scenery soothed not the griefs of Rosalia : she soon retired from the window ; her eyes involuntarily glanced round the apartment. Magnificent as had the anti-chamber and bed-room appeared, the one she was now in far exceeded them in splendour. The walls were hung with

green satin ; the curtains suspended from the tops of the lofty windows, and the coverings of the sofas and chairs, were of the same colour, richly embroidered with silver, and edged with deep silver fringe. Tables of bright green jasper, curiously wrought, stood in recesses, while superb and lofty mirrors reflected the surrounding objects. The floor was spread with rich carpetting, which exhibited a variety of beautiful flowers, so admirably imitated, that Rosalia almost fancied her light step crushed their blooming sweets.

From the moment she entered the castle until the present, she had been too deeply occupied with her sorrows, to allow her to pay the least attention to the objects that surrounded her ; but now she gazed in amazement. To behold the most costly furniture, in the European stile, in the residence of a Moorish chief, excited in her the most perplexing ideas : in vain she formed various conjectures—the mystery was beyond her power to penetrate ; she

had, therefore, only to depend on time for its elucidation.

Turning from the contemplation of what appeared so inexplicable, she again moved to the window, where she remained mournfully observing the last rays of the setting sun sink behind the distant mountains, while her agonized fancy recurred to scenes of happiness which were, perhaps, never to be renewed.

The entrance of Zellida with lights, interrupted the sad reflections of Rosalia.—The former silently proceeded to make arrangements for supper, which having done, she withdrew.

In a few minutes she returned with wine, fruit, and cakes, which she had evidently received from some person who attended at the door of the antichamber.

Although the heart of Rosalia was still too heavily oppressed to suffer her to feel the want of sustenance, yet, in the hope of prevailing on Zellida to answer her anxious enquiries, she accepted a cake and
a small

a small quantity of wine: in this hope, however, she was quickly disappointed. All her endeavours to induce the wary attendant to satisfy her doubts were in vain: concise replies, and evident signs of reluctance to converse on the subject, were the only returns Zellida gave to the imploring entreaties of the lovely captive.

Thus unsuccessful, she now became anxious to be alone. With this view she soon retired to her chamber—not to enjoy repose, but to pass the night in unavailing sorrow, and useless conjectures.

Any information of who, or of what nation, the owner of the castle might be, she had failed to obtain: but that she had been an expected guest, and that secrecy, respecting her captive state, was to be observed, were now evident; else wherefore, in a deserted and decayed wing of the edifice, had she found apartments so sumptuously furnished as those she now occupied?

It was impossible for her to form any other probable conjectures; and these

were of so alarming a nature, that she shuddered as they darted across her mind, while the keen anguish that wrung her heart, when the sorrow of the Marchese, of her brother, and of Guidoni, occurred to her imagination, encreased her sufferings to agony. Her only, yet never-failing resource, in this hour of wretchedness, was prayer; to this devout purpose she devoted the passing moments; seeking from Heaven that consolation and hope, which alone could support her under the horrors her sad prospects presented.

At an early hour in the morning, Rosalia, after passing a sleepless night, arose, and found breakfast prepared in the splendid apartment adjoining her chamber; a variety of exquisite fruits, sweetmeats, cakes, and coffee, were arranged on a service of massy gold.

Zellida, who had spent the night on a couch in the antichamber, attended during the repast; and while Rosalia took coffee, she could not avoid observing the violent
agitation

agitation that was now evident in the countenance of the former.

Her large dark eyes flashed wildly ; at times her air became haughty and sullen ; but whenever she glanced on the pale, but beautiful, countenance of Rosalia, her terrifying looks were changed into those of languish and pity. Perceiving that she was attentively observed, she suddenly withdrew ; and when Rosalia returned to the chamber, she found her busied in arranging a profusion of jewels on the toilet, which she now quitted, and having crossed the apartment, brought forward and presented to the view of Rosalia several splendid habits, which she informed her were for her use ; then requested her to chuse whichever might meet with her approbation.

Rosalia turned away in horror and disgust : her trembling limbs failed to support her, and she sunk on the sofa.

"I earnestly entreat you," she faintly articulated, raising her languid eyes to the

half-averted face of Zellida, "I solemnly conjure you to inform me where I am?"

Zellida seemed affected; she paused a moment, and then, without looking on Rosalia, said—"Why will you persist, Signora, in seeking information which I am not at liberty to give? A very short time will elucidate all this mystery; I cannot converse on this point. Suffer me to assist you to change your dress."

Rosalia breathed a heavy sigh. She felt more than ever reluctant to assume the sumptuous apparel provided for her use; but she had been compelled to do so during the voyage, and was now equally destitute of any alternative. Zellida continuing to importune her on this subject, she, at length, chose the least splendid habit among the whole assortment: but she positively refused to wear any of the brilliant ornaments.

While assisting Rosalia in the arrangement of her dress, Zellida appeared alternately confused and absent; and when the former

former quitted the toilet, she regarded her with one of those looks, so singular and undescribable, that had frequently astonished and shocked the mourning captive.

“Your wish of knowing in whose protection you are,” said she, hesitatingly, “will soon be gratified. The Lord of this castle requests permission to wait on you, either in these apartments or in the saloon of the white marble hall.”

The chill of horror pervaded the frame of Rosalia at this intimation. She now understood the motive of Zellida for causing her to change her attire, and she shuddered at having been thus deluded into assuming a splendid habit, to appear before the wretch, who, it was probable, had caused her to be so barbarously torn from the bosom of her family. Though the message she had now received was no more than might have been expected, yet the shock it gave her nearly overpowered her senses. Zellida, observing her droop-

ing state, presented her a glass of water, which having taken, her spirits revived.

Confused as were her ideas at this moment, she could not forbear entertaining a hope that this interview, however dreaded, would afford the means of ending the agonizing suspense and uncertainty hitherto attached to her unhappy situation, and that she should quickly learn in what nation she was a prisoner. This hope suggested to her also that it might be possible to procure her liberty, by the offer of a ransom, equal to the avarice of her captor. At all events, by ascertaining in what part of the globe she then was, she might, perchance, find some opportunity of informing her beloved father of her situation.

These reflections restored her now to a comparative degree of calmness, and she endeavoured to fortify her mind for whatever might be the result of the approaching interview. To procrastinate it was useless; she therefore soon signified to
Zellida

Zellida that she was ready to accompany her to the saloon.

Rosalia's reason for this procedure was the objection she felt to receiving the proposed visit in the apartments allotted to herself; they being far distant from the inhabited part of the castle: besides, by thus emerging from close confinement, she might discover more to her own advantage than she could possibly do by remaining where she was.

When, at length, she arose from her seat, with the intent to quit the apartment, Zellida hesitated to follow: then regarding her for a moment with a look of anguish, she said—

“ A few moments only, and you will learn your intended fate. When this interview is over, I shall, perhaps, see you no more; an attendant more agreeable will supply my place; her rusticity will not prove disgusting to *you*, Signōra, whose prejudices teach you to love *virtue*, and I could almost wish you as happy as you are—

good !—Oh ! could you know the horrors of guilt !”

Rosalia shuddered. The expression of Zellida’s countenance, and the tone of her voice, thrilled to her heart.

The latter, however, soon resumed a composed air, and Rosalia’s terror decreased. Turning on the wretched woman, her expressive eyes beaming heavenly compassion—“ May you be happy, Zellida,” she sweetly uttered, in the soft accents of pity.

“ Happy !” reiterated Zellida, “ *Me happy !*—Oh, how impossible !”—her striking countenance, while she spoke, exhibiting horror and despair dreadfully mingled.

Rosalia turned away. The wild glare of Zellida’s eye had struck her with dismay.

Observing the effect her words and manner had produced, Zellida made another effort to appear composed : she succeeded in this attempt, and in a softened tone, said—

“ Before we part, Signora di Romanzini,
allow

allow me to entreat your pardon for the many strange inconsistencies you may have observed in my conduct. My birth is noble : years of the most dreadful slavery have degraded my mind, but not subdued my spirit ; that still retains energies which torment me.—Now, for the first time, I begin to be sensible of the miseries of my situation, and——but wherefore should I seek your pity ?”

Zellida turned aside, to hide emotions she could no longer conceal or overcome, while Rosalia, from whose mind the words of the former—“A few moments only, and you will learn your intended fate,” not all the subsequent expressions she had heard, could banish the recollection of, stood sorrowful and irresolute. The dread she had at first felt of appearing before the unprincipled man who had thus arrogated to himself the disposal of her future destiny, was now considerably aggravated, by an intimation which so forcibly implied the tyrannous exertion of lawless power.—

Now to go voluntarily into his presence, was what her soul recoiled at the idea of: yet what was to be done?—If she should refuse to attend his command, he would, undoubtedly, intrude himself into the apartments she occupied; her objection to which still existed, as did also her reason for wishing to leave awhile the place of her confinement.

Zellida, who during the sad musing of Rosalia, had recovered herself, allowed the latter no time for further deliberation.—Advancing, with that air of mildness she could, at times, so well assume, she informed the dejected Rosalia that she waited to conduct her to the saloon.

Though at this moment undecided how to act in the frightful dilemma she found herself involved in, yet a moment's reflection convinced her, that to oppose either request made by the despotic arbiter of her present actions, would be utterly vain; she therefore resolved to submit with patience to what could not be avoided: and
while

while endeavouring to summon all her fortitude, she told Zellida she was ready to accompany her.

Notwithstanding the mental exertion now made by Rosalia, she proceeded from the apartments with a beating heart and trembling limbs. Zellida conducted her along the corridor, at the extremity of which the former opened a door, and they now entered an extensive gallery, adorned with military trophies and accoutrements. The windows, emblazoned with magnificent armorial bearings, were illuminated by the brilliant beams of the setting sun; while the polished helmets, and weapons of war, glittered in the vivid rays.

The order that appeared in this gallery, assured Rosalia that she was now in the inhabited part of the castle. With encreasing tremor, she followed her conductress to the end of the gallery, where lofty folding doors of cedar opened on a broad flight of marble steps, which they slowly descended,

descended, and entered a spacious hall, the fretted roof of which was supported by pillars of white marble. A high arched window, at the extremity, admitted the blaze of day, partially intercepted by the shadowing branches of the majestic pines, that waved their tall heads in the breeze.

Here Zellida, who had hitherto been silent, suddenly stopped, and said—"Do you think, Signora, you can find your way back to your own apartments, without my attending you thither?"

Rosalia, who neither hoped protection from, nor was in the least attached to this woman, coolly replied in the affirmative. Several doors opened into this hall; one of which Zellida now threw open, and stood aside to permit Rosalia to enter.

A faint chill struck on the heart of the latter. She advanced a few steps, and found herself in a magnificent saloon, at the upper end of which stood a man of noble air: he instantly approached, and
while

while addressing her in low and faltering accents, Rosalia raised her eyes, and beheld—Don Hernandez de Marino !!

Astonishment rivetted her to the spot.—She stood gazing in wild amazement: Don Hernandez, confused and agitated, attempted to speak, but his efforts were checked by the violent emotions of his mind.

“Is it possible !” at length faintly exclaimed the astonished Rosalia, “that you, Don Hernandez, have thus torn me from my beloved relatives?—Do I behold in *you* my persecutor?”

“Oh, say not so, lovely Rosalia,” returned Hernandez, endeavouring to recover from his visible confusion; “call not the man who adores you, by so harsh a name.—Forgive the device of ardent love, driven to desperation, and suffer me at your feet to implore your pity.”

The varied sensations of Rosalia were at this moment so oppressive, that she had sunk to the floor, had not Hernandez sustained

tained and conveyed her to a sofa, where, in a few minutes, she regained her recollection.

With encreased astonishment, indignation, and terror, she shrunk from the insidious attentions of Hernandez, and attempted to rise, with an intention of quitting the apartment, when he detained her, and throwing himself at her feet, again avowed that he adored her, and solemnly protested that no power on earth should tear her from him.

“When I first beheld you in Italy,” he continued, “I became the captive of your irresistible charms. Your refusal of Ferdinand Alvanio encouraged me to hope that your heart was disengaged, and I indulged the fervent passion you had inspired. Oh, imagine what anguish I endured, when it was hinted to me that it was supposed you distinguished the Count Guidoni with your favour! the agony, the despair, I felt at the moment, almost deprived me of reason. Hopeless of success, I confined
my

my misery within my own bosom ; and saw you depart for Orenza, without giving you the least cause to suppose that I adored you. I struggled with my passion, and vainly endeavoured to erase the deep impression your angel form had made upon my heart : but oh, Rosalia, how impossible !—I have, since I last beheld you, traversed Italy. I engaged in a thousand gay and busy scenes, in the hope of banishing your image from my mind. About five months ago I returned to Madrid, where I learned from my friend, the Count Alvania, the events which have taken place in your family. The return of your brother shed a faint beam of hope on my sad heart : no longer the wealthy heiress of Orenza, I dared to imagine the Marchese would not refuse his Rosalia to my entreaties.—The news of your intended nuptials with Guidoni dispersed the flattering delusion. I quitted Madrid, and sought, in the solitary gloom of my castle, that peace which I too soon found had
flown

flown for ever ! —At length, distracted, and unable to endure life without you, I formed the bold design of carrying you off: in this I succeeded ; and the happy artifice of disguising those I employed on the occasion, in the Moorish habit, will effectually screen me from either suspicion or discovery. You are now mine, Lady Rosalia ; 'tis beyond the power of fate to separate us !—Consent, then, to bless the man who is determined to die a thousand deaths rather than resign you ! I do not deceive you, lady ; the sincerity with which I speak, evinces what you may expect.”

Don Hernandez ceased. His late emotions had subsided into the steady coolness of fixed design, and he gazed on Rosalia with a look that too well confirmed the resolves he had avowed.

Rosalia, who had listened in silent horror, still remained motionless ; her eyes were bent on the ground, and the paleness of death had overspread her lovely face.

For some minutes a pause ensued. Hernandez,

nandez, at length, alarmed at the state in which he beheld her, addressed her in the softest terms, and gently raised her icy hand. His voice and action dissipated the chilling torpor that pervaded her heart.—Instantly she started from her seat, and averting her eyes, attempted to rush from the saloon. Hernandez caught her in his arms, and prevented her escape.

Shrinking with horror and disgust, she disengaged herself; and the glow of virtuous indignation suffused her cheek.

“Detain me not, Don Hernandez,” she said, while the severe, yet mild, dignity of her manner, caused him to retreat. “I have hitherto listened to the horrible avowal of your unjust designs with undescribable astonishment!—So extraordinary does your conduct appear, that I almost doubt the reality of what I have heard.—But that you may not, even for a moment, indulge the vain hope that your arts or menaces will ever prove successful, I now solemnly

solemnly assure you, in the awful presence of the Almighty Father, whose protection I implore, that no earthly power shall compel me to become yours."

Rosalia then quitted the apartment, leaving Don Hernandez bewildered, and amazed at the firm, but calm, air, with which she had declared her unalterable resolution.

CHAP. VIII.

WHEN Rosalia reached her apartment, the fortitude with which she felt herself inspired, did not forsake her.

Her amazement at finding, in Don Hernandez de Marino, the author of her distress, encreased every moment. The circumstance appeared incredible: the disparity of his years; his relationship to her beloved Countess Alvanio; his political character, and the private virtues which were ascribed to him—rendered his present conduct beyond the utmost limits of probability. Yet, singular and lamentable as his proceedings were, the fact was too certain:

certain : and now she could console herself only with the hope of being much more likely to escape from his power, than she could possibly have done, had she really been, as she had feared, in that of the Moors ; especially as she was no longer to be shocked by the sight of the wretched Zellida, who now appeared to her in a view infinitely more dreadful than that of a hapless captive to the infidels. That the name of Zellida was assumed, Rosalia now thought was unquestionable. It seemed but too evident that the unfortunate being was a degraded and unprincipled woman, subservient to the vices of Hernandez. Most grateful did Rosalia feel in the idea, that so hateful an object would never more intrude into her presence : she recollected that this woman had intimated to her, that her next attendant would be a simple rustic—a circumstance that flattered her hopes of flight. Fortunately, on the day on which she was carried off, for the humane purpose of relieving the distresses

of a poor peasant family near the villa, she had filled her purse with ducats : this money she had not found an opportunity of disposing of, as she had designed ; and as no attempt was made to deprive her of it, while on board the galley, it still remained in her possession. The sum was large : she knew it to be more than sufficient to carry her to Roses or Barcelona ; and likewise to procure her admission into a convent, where she might find a secure asylum, till her family should be apprized of her situation. To seek the protection of the Count Alvania, now occurred : but suddenly recollecting that a short time prior to that on which she was carried off, letters had been received from the Count, in which he had mentioned an intention of leaving Spain, in a few days after the period at which they were written, the hope this suggestion had inspired, now vanished ; for she felt certain that the Count had, ere now, departed for Italy : she could, therefore,

fore, under Heaven, rely only on her own endeavours to effect her escape.

Happily she now knew that she was in Spain, and in the Castle de Riverra, an ancient structure, situated in the Pyrenees. This knowledge imparted a faint hope that she might yet be able to find means of extricating herself from her present alarming situation. The castle, she knew, had formed part of the inheritance of Isabella di Riverra; and that, some time after her marriage with the Count Alvanio, the latter had, without previously consulting his Lady, disposed of the castle to his friend, Don Hernandez. This circumstance the Countess had frequently mentioned, and always expressed the deepest regret at the loss. For hours, Rosalia and Josephine had been amused by her with the legends attached to Riverra, and her long accounts of its former magnificence.

This vast edifice, the chief parts of which proudly defied the hand of Time, was erected
in

in the twelfth century ; and on the extinction of its first owners, was, with other estates, bestowed by Ferdinand and Isabella, in fourteen hundred and ninety-four, upon Don Frederick de Riverra, a Knight, who had signalized his bravery at the conquest of Grenada. From that period it was the favourite residence of the De Riverras : but to none had it been more dear than to Don Anselmo, the father of the Countess. His partiality to seclusion led him to fly from the solemn gravity of the Spanish court, to the calm tranquillity his retired castle afforded. Here, with a beloved wife, his little Isabella, and his nephew Hernandez, years flew unheeded ; and Don Anselmo knew no sorrow till the death of his lady. The castle was now no longer the seat of happiness ; every thing around him reminded him of his loss : he therefore resolved to quit it, and accompanied by his daughter and Hernandez, he returned to Madrid : but again becoming tired with the ceremony of the court, he

departed from the capital, placed his daughter in a convent, and having no longer the society of his nephew, who was now at the university, he sought to amuse his mind by travelling, which he continued to do for the space of two years: at the expiration of which he removed his daughter from the convent, and once more repaired with her to Madrid; where, shortly after, she became the wife of the Count Alvanio. Don Anselmo survived these nuptials only a few weeks.

One visit to the Castle de Riverra sufficed to disgust the Count Alvanio: the lonely situation, the wild and romantic scenery that surrounded it, were by no means congenial with the gaiety of his disposition; he therefore quickly returned to Madrid, while the Countess repaired to an elegant villa near Seragosa, another of the possessions which had accompanied the gift of her hand to the Count.

These accounts Rosalia had received
from

from the Countess, and as she had also learned from that lady that Don Hernandez owned no castle but that of Riverra, she was no longer at a loss to conjecture the place of her confinement.

Amongst the many traditions she had heard the Countess likewise relate, was one, every particular of which now forcibly occurred to her recollection.

Some ages past, it was said that immense caverns were situated beneath the long range of rocks that ran along one side of the castle, extending nearly a mile up the mountains to the ruins of a monastery, whose mouldering arches were hid in the dark forest. Tradition further reported, that in these caverns many pious Christians, during the troubles of the eighth century, had found shelter from the fury of the invading Infidels; and that, in later times, the subterranean abodes had afforded an equally secure retreat to the pious Monks and Nuns of the monastery of San Stephano.

However, as the various tales relating to these caverns were of a very ancient date, and not well authenticated, scarcely any degree of credit was attached to them.—Nor was it believed, though it had been asserted, that there was some passage leading through the vaults of the castle, which communicated with these caverns, no discovery of the kind having ever been made by the Riverra family; of course, Rosalia could place no reliance on a tradition which appeared to be involved in so much uncertainty: nevertheless she could not suppress a regret at being devoid of power to ascertain whether the report was true or false.

Both the monastery and the church of San Stephano, she had heard, had been long mouldering into ruins: a few gothic arches alone remained, to point out the spot where the sacred fane had once reared its slender spires: but no trace of either structure was visible from the windows of
the

the apartments she occupied, though they commanded a view to the extremity of the range of rocks.

While calling to mind the different tales she had formerly attended to, she recollected having heard some singular relations respecting the south wing of the castle, which accounted for its being in a deserted state before her arrival; but as these stories might be merely the effect of superstition, and as she dreaded only the living, they employed not her thoughts for a moment.

Although it was impossible for Rosalia to entertain the faintest idea of hope, in respect to discovering any way by which she might escape, yet she felt that no prospect of difficulty or danger should deter her from using every possible exertion to free herself from the controul of the unprincipled Hernandez.

The mournful reflections of Rosalia were interrupted by the entrance of Zelida, followed by a young girl, whose simple attire and innocent looks would

have interested the former, had she not beheld her in the castle of which her base persecutor was owner.

“I informed you, Signora, this morning,” said Zellida, “that another attendant had been provided—not such, indeed, as is suited to your rank. However, you now, I suppose, know the necessity of prudent concealment, therefore will not be surprised at this arrangement. Agnes,” she continued, “will remain constantly in your apartments.”

Rosalia deigned not to reply. Zellida looked earnestly at her for a moment; then walking slowly to the door, said—“Farewell, lady,” and instantly disappeared.

The intimation that her new attendant was not to quit the apartments, was by no means pleasing to Rosalia: she feared that all her efforts to escape would be rendered ineffectual by the watchfulness of this girl, whom she could not doubt was meant to be a spy upon her minutest actions.

Alarmed, perplexed, and grieved, she
cast

cast a glance of scrutiny on the simple Agnes, who stood, timid and trembling, awaiting her commands. The ingenuous, modesty, and unfeigned *naiïvete*, that appeared in this girl, surprised her: she thought it impossible that hypocrisy could wear the guise of such apparent innocence.

“Have you long resided in the castle?” at length enquired Rosalia.

Agnes made no reply: she blushed, curtsied, and shook her head.

Rosalia had spoken in Italian. She now recollected that the girl was a Spaniard.—Fortunately, Rosalia was well acquainted with the Spanish language, having been early taught it, and having repeatedly conversed in Spanish with the Countess and Ferdinand, both of whom had taken great pleasure in improving her in the knowledge of their native tongue.

In this language she repeated her question. Agnes looked overjoyed, and encouraged by that look of affability, so

natural to Rosalia, and which was now mingled with a plaintive expression of sorrow, she replied—

“I came here, Senora, only half an hour ago.”

“Indeed !” said Rosalia, rather surprised. “Where did you reside before you came hither ?”

“I lived with my aunt at Barcelona, Senora,” was the reply.

“And what occasioned you to enter into servitude ?”

“It was owing to my cousin Pedro, Senora ; he is in the service of Don Hernandez, the Lord of this castle, and he came about two days ago, and took me from my aunt.”

“You were inclined to quit your relation, then ?”

“No, Senora ; when it came to the last I cried heartily with grief. My parents are both dead—they were Italians ; and my aunt took me, when I was a poor little orphan, and brought me up.”

“No

“No wonder, then, you regretted quitting so kind a relative.”

“Indeed, Senora, I do love my aunt in my soul. I do not think I could love her more, if she had used me——”

Agnes hesitated.

“Why do you pause?” enquired Rosalia, attentively regarding the girl, who appeared embarrassed.

“Because, Senora,” returned she, “Father Antonio always taught me, and I feel that what he said is right, that we should *remember* only the *good* we have received, and forget all the *evils* we have suffered. I was a great charge to my aunt, for I could not help eating a little now and then, and having a few clothes to wear; and my poor aunt thought a great deal of both; and yet she could not think more of that matter than I did, and always shall: and now I am in service, I will be sure to send all the money I can save; for I ought to make all the return I can for the good she did to me.”

“ You do right to entertain a sense of gratitude ; yet your words infer that you were not very kindly treated by your relative. Is she an Italian ? ”

“ No, Senora, she is a Spaniard, and was married to my mother’s brother : but she is a widow now, and Pedro, that lives in this castle, is her only son.”

“ How long has your cousin been in the service of Don Hernandez ? ”

“ Oh, a great many years, Senora, and he is a great favourite with his Lord. When he came to fetch me, he told my aunt I should be well taken care of at the castle, and he was very kind to me all the way we came together ; and when we arrived at the castle, he took me into a fine room, where I saw the Senor Don Hernandez, and the Senora that brought me here.— They looked very hard at me, and then said something I did not understand. Then the Senor told me I was to attend a beautiful young lady ; but at the time I did not think it was right to engage me for such a place,

place, because I am not fit to wait upon a lady. But indeed, Senora, if you will please to bear with my ignorance for a while, I will learn any thing you require; and indeed I will serve you to the best of my power in all you command."

Rosalia, anxious to discover the disposition of her rustic attendant, and to learn, if possible, from her discourse, whether she was deserving of the opinion which, at first sight of her, she had formed, paid strict attention to every sentence uttered by the simple girl.

Though unexperienced in the wiles of hypocrisy, she could discriminate between the real and assumed appearance of innocence, and quickly perceived in Agnes many traits of an excellent heart. Her affection and gratitude to a relation, who, it appeared, had treated her with unkindness, and added bitterness to the bread of dependence, were convincing proofs that the girl possessed a generous mind, and a

sensibility not usually found among people of her condition.

Sincerity sparkled in the eye, and glowed on the cheek of Agnes, while giving her artless detail ; and Rosalia began to hope, that should she find any way of attempting her escape, to effect it would not be attended with the difficulties she apprehended.

The opening of the antichamber door interrupted the musings of Rosalia : she turned to observe who entered, and saw a man advance into the room with refreshments ; this person Agnes immediately made known, by addressing him by the name of Pedro.

The domestic, respectfully bowing to Rosalia, silently proceeded to make arrangements for dinner ; and while thus employed, he attentively glanced his eye several times on her ; yet profound respect marked his manner, and the few instructions he gave to Agnes, were delivered in a low and mild tone. His countenance, however, formed a singular contrast to his behaviour ;
the

the traces of a cunning smile sometimes crossed his dark features, and his side-long glances fell with such peculiar penetration on Rosalia, that, disgusted and displeased, she withdrew to her chamber.

Pedro was too quick-sighted, not to perceive that the Senora had retired purposely to avoid his observation; and, with a significant and insolent smile, his eye followed her steps.

Then turning to Agnes, he said—"Come, as your lady seems not to want your immediate attendance, I will shew you where you are to eat and sleep, for you are not to quit this side of the building."

"Oh dear! what, am *I* to be shut up *here*?" cried the girl, in a tone expressive of fear, as she followed him into the corridor.

"Shut up here!" reiterated Pedro, casting an angry look on Agnes, "why, what would you have?—Did I not take you from starving and hard blows, and do you now dare to find fault? I believe I forgot

to

to tell you that the Senor——confound this lock,” exclaimed he, in a rough tone, striving to open a door at the end of the corridor, which, after much trouble, he at length effected.

“Here,” continued he, leading the way into a large dreary chamber, “look what a grand room I have prepared for you!”

Agnes threw a glance of terror around the spacious apartment, the walls of which were hung with tapestry, representing the early wars with the Moors. The gigantic figures, the scene of blood and devastation, were here strikingly depicted, and horrible to survey. Two narrow arched windows, dimmed with dust and cobwebs, admitted a kind of doubtful light, which rendered the gloomy horrors of the tapestry more terrific.

“There’s a bed,” added Pedro, “fit for an Emperor; not a little straw by the side of a hovel.”

Poor Agnes, however, now most ardently wished

wished to exchange the dark purple damask hangings, and the plumed canopy, for that same little bed of straw.

“What!” cried Pedro, looking furiously at the trembling girl, “what! an’t you satisfied?—By the mass, I’ve half a mind to send you back to Barcelona. But no, that would be letting you have your own way, perhaps; and his Excellency, the Senor, says, that women never know their own minds, so it’s useless to humour their vagaries.”

“Here,” continued he, opening the door of a large dark closet, “here you will find plenty of wood, so that you may make fires for the Senora and yourself, in a minute, whenever she chooses to have one.”

Observing the tears of fear and disappointment trembling in the downcast eyes of Agnes, Pedro continued in a softened tone—“Come, don’t be a fool, Agnes; all I have done is for your good. As I was saying, I forgot to tell you that the Senora

never

never leaves this side of the castle: you know it wouldn't be safe, as she is hiding from her father. Mind what I bid you, and I'll make your fortune."

"But this room is so dismal," sighed Agnes, her eye fixed on the tapestry.

"Dismal—pshaw!" exclaimed Pedro, "why, you won't be here for ever, you know. But tell me, how does the Senora make you understand what she wants?"

"Why, she speaks Spanish, you know," replied Agnes, surprised at this question.

"She does, does she?—Oh ho," exclaimed Pedro, with a look expressive of surprise and sly self-satisfaction at the discovery, "if my Lord had known that, you, Agnes, would not have been here. But never mind, you shan't lose your place, so be a good girl. You must now go and attend the Señora at dinner, and when that is over, I will bring something nice into this room for *you*. You are a very pretty girl, Agnes, and I'll always be a friend to you."

Agnes

Agnes silently followed across the corridor; and at the door of Rosalia's apartment, Pedro quitted her, saying he would return in a few minutes with dinner.

When Agnes entered, she found Rosalia had returned to the eating-room. The melancholy looks and tearful eyes of the girl, immediately struck her lady, who could not forbear enquiring what was the matter?

"Nothing, Senora," hesitatingly replied Agnes, with a deep sigh.

Rosalia, suddenly alarmed, repeated her enquiry, in a tone of earnestness.

"You wont be angry with me, Senora, if I tell you?" faltered Agnes.

"I hope there will be no occasion for displeasure," said Rosalia, with surprise and encreased emotion.

"Indeed, Senora, I wish I was not so frightened," tremulously articulated the girl; "but this, this is the south wing of the castle, I am sure."

"Certainly it is," returned Rosalia.

"What

“What is there in the circumstance to make you unhappy?”

“You don’t know then, Senora,” said Agnes, with a look of inquisitiveness and terror. “Oh dear! pray don’t ask me, Senora, to tell you, for——”

The entrance of Pedro with dinner, interrupted and silenced Agnes. Rosalia, at sight of this man, again left the apartment, while Pedro, who looked on her thus withdrawing as an intimation that his attendance would be dispensed with, hastily arranged the repast, and withdrew; not omitting, however, to tell Agnes to be sure to come as soon as she conveniently could to her own chamber, where she would find, he said, a good dinner provided for her.

Hearing Pedro withdraw, Rosalia returned to the room, and found the table spread with delicacies, which she had no inclination to taste. The artless and pressing entreaties of Agnes, however, prevailed on her to take some fruit.

She

She then resumed the subject, which the entrance of Pedro had caused to be dropped, and again questioned Agnes, why she appeared so unhappy at the idea of being in the south wing?

Poor Agnes, after standing a few moments silent, and evidently confused, said —“ Indeed, Senora, I wish you had not asked me to tell you. I am sure I would much rather bear all the fright myself, than see you, who look so good, and speak so kind, terrified out of your wits. Dear me, if I had not seen that dismal room, I should not have known where we are.”

“ What room ?” enquired Rosalia, with a slight degree of impatience.

“ The ancient tapestry room, with the purple bed, Senora,” rejoined Agnes, turning pale at the recollection.

“ When were you there ?” demanded Rosalia.

“ A little time ago, Senora,” replied the girl. “ When you first went into your chamber, Pedro took me to shew me where

I am

I am to eat and sleep ; and, oh, holy Santa Mary guard us ! he brought me into the purple chamber, and then I knew I was in the south wing. These apartments are so new-looking, that I shouldn't have found out where I was, if this hadn't happened.— Oh, I'm afraid I shall never come out of that room alive in the morning.”

Rosalia could not avoid smiling at the fears of the girl, while her humanity led her to attempt dissuading her from the superstitious terrors she expressed.

Finding her endeavours to that effect in vain, Rosalia dismissed her, desiring her to hasten, lest her dinner should be spoiled.

Agnes loitered—cast a look on the refreshments that had been served for Rosalia—and that look seemed to say, suffer me to taste these ; I durst not go where you command.

Compassion for the girl would have caused Rosalia to grant this silent, but eloquent, petition, had she not thought it improper to interfere in the arrangements
of

of Don Hernandez, respecting his servant. She therefore appeared not to notice the mute appeal of Agnes: yet that pity, which her amiable mind ever indulged for the innocent weakness of a fellow creature, induced her to purpose accompanying the girl to the dreaded room; having first enquired of her, whether she expected Pedro to be present?

“O dear, no, Senora,” replied Agnes, her countenance brightening with the expression of unfeigned gratitude, “he said I should find my dinner waiting for me there. I am sure he would not think of attending upon me. Oh, dear lady, how kind and condescending you are to a poor person!—Oh, I am sure I am bound to pray that you and the cavalier you love, may be blessed and happy all your lives.”

Rosalia, who certainly did feel some little curiosity to see this terrific chamber, had already preceded Agnes some steps; and as the latter spoke in an under tone, the concluding sentence passed unattended

to by the former, in whose mind it was too well calculated to revive the most painful sensations.

When they drew nigh the dreaded apartment, Agnes hung back. Rosalia advanced, and having thrown open the door, entered, but instantly stepped back, and moved towards her apartments; while Agnes, completely terrified, ran shrieking along the corridor: the voice of Pedro, however, arrested her cries. She turned back, and saw her lady enter the antichamber: at that moment, Pedro, who had hurried down the corridor, caught the hand of the affrighted girl, and led her to the chamber.

The precipitate retreat of Rosalia was merely occasioned by the sight of Pedro, seated before a large fire, the table, covered with plenty and variety, standing near him, and an high antique chair vacant on the opposite side, evidently meant to be occupied by Agnes.

The circumstance of finding this man
waiting,

waiting, beyond a doubt, to partake the meal of Agnes, revived all the unpleasant suspicions of Rosalia. She had been deceived, she thought: the girl now appeared to her as an artful spy, who, under the well-feigned guise of extreme simplicity, had endeavoured to impose on her understanding; this idea, which what she had seen so naturally suggested, soon yielded to one more favourable to Agnes.

She thought it highly improbable that the girl would have so joyfully accepted her offer of accompanying her, notwithstanding her uninformed mind might be impressed with superstitious terrors, had she been apprized of her cousin's intention of waiting for, and remaining a while with her, in the chamber of which she expressed so much dread. Again Rosalia thought, how could the girl decline an offer which had been made in consequence of her own fears, and apparent reluctance to enter that room, unless she had declared a motive for a conduct so inconsistent. Doubt again

predominated in the mind of Rosalia: she wished to think well of Agnes, yet could form no decided opinion of her character—a point on which she felt extremely anxious and perplexed; for on the finding this girl as innocent and simple as she appeared to be, rested all her hopes of discovering, if possible, some outlet, through which she might make her escape from the castle. Beside this important consideration, her ingenuous and noble mind was too severely pained by suspicion, not to be anxious to be relieved from it.

Agnes might be false, or she might be really what she appeared; yet a moment of cool reflection shewed Rosalia that her trust should rest only on that Gracious Power, to whom she had always looked for support under every trial.

An hour passed ere Agnes returned; and Rosalia was now indeed struck with her appearance. Her cheek was flushed, and retained the traces of tears; her eyelids were swelled with weeping, and she
stood

stood before her lady silent, but in an agitation which she vainly endeavoured to conquer.

“What is the matter now, Agnes?” eagerly demanded the astonished Rosalia.

Agnes burst into tears. A pause ensued. Rosalia, in a faint voice, again enquired the cause of her emotion?

“Oh, dear Senora,” sobbed the girl, “I—I have promised—not to tell.”

“Very well,” said Rosalia, gravely, and rising from her seat.

She was retiring from the room, when Agnes, again bursting into tears, flew after her, and falling on her knees, said—

“Oh, dear Senora—don’t be displeased with me. Indeed I did not mean to offend you, but—but how can you, who look so good, live in such a terrifying place?—Pray, pray ask the Senor to send me away; for though I should grieve to leave you, I can’t bear to stay any longer. I am afraid of the ghosts, to be sure, and yet

I think I am not so much afraid of them, as I am of——”

“Of what?” anxiously interrupted Rosalia.

“Of——of——my cousin Pedro,” sobbed Agnes.

“And wherefore of him?” enquired, with a trembling voice, the amazed and agitated Rosalia.

“Oh, dear Senora,” replied the girl, half stifled by her tears, “he says—he says that he’s in love with me.”

Rosalia was silent.

“And now, Senora,” continued Agnes, “what will become of me? But when will you leave this place?—When will the cavalier come to fetch you away?—Oh, Holy Mary, send him soon. Dear Senora, when will you go?—Shall I—shall I go with you?”

Rosalia, at a loss to understand what the girl meant by the cavalier, and scarcely knowing what she said, replied—“How am

I to

I to go?—How can I fly this horrid place?
—Do you not know I am a prisoner here?”

“A prisoner!” exclaimed Agnes, surprise overcoming her grief, and starting up, “a prisoner!—Why, did not the cavalier you love so much, bring you here to hide you from my Lord, your father, Senora? and an’t you only waiting a while till he comes, and——”

“Who has told you these falsehoods?” interrupted Rosalia, less astonished at what she heard, than interested by the varying emotions that were now observable in the looks of Agnes.

“Why, Pedro, Senora,” replied the girl, earnestly fixing her eyes on the face of Rosalia; “and is it not all *true*?”

“No, my good Agnes, you are imposed upon: there is no truth in what you have been told.”

“Oh blessed Saint Ignatius!” exclaimed Agnes, crossing herself, “then Pedro has been telling fibs. Well, I am glad I know it. Father Antonio told me I must never

tell a story myself, nor hide one for any body. So, Senora, I'll tell you all they told me—that is, my cousin told me—well, would you believe it, Senora, but he told me that you had run away with a young cavalier from Italy, who you was in love with, against the will of your father; and that the cavalier was a great friend of Don Hernandez, and had brought you to the castle, to hide you from the fury of your father: and that as soon as your fears and the pursuit were over, you would marry the cavalier, and retire with him into some remote part of Spain; and when my Lord, your father, should happen to die, you would return to your own country; and what's more, Pedro promised me that I should go with you: And now, Senora, he wants me to marry him, and to stay hid up in this frightful old castle. But my cousin must not think to make a fool of me, nor suppose that I will believe his stories: and since you are a prisoner against your own will, Senora, why I will tell him

him how wicked he is; and if you can but get away, I will follow you all the world over.—Dear, I thought I was to be pitied, but what a sad thing it is to see a beautiful young lady like you shut up here! You wont bear it, Senora, will you?—Oh no, do try to get away.”

The animated sincerity which shone in the countenance of this uninformed girl, pleased Rosalia, and dispelled her suspicions.

“At present,” replied she, “the attempt appears impracticable; but if any way of escaping should present itself, may I depend on your fidelity, Agnes?”

Agnes protested she would do any thing to serve so good a lady.

“We will endeavour, then,” said Rosalia, “to discover whether there exists a possibility of effecting an escape: but remember,” she solemnly added, “if you betray my intentions, I am lost; the rage Don Hernandez would feel on the occasion, might urge him to sacrifice our lives.”

Agnes turned pale with terror at this intimation : quickly recovering, however, she eagerly raised the small cross suspended from her neck, and fervently vowed to conceal all her lady had entrusted her with.

“ Then I mustn’t tell Pedro how wicked he is, and that I almost hate him ? ” she added, with great simplicity.

“ By no means,” returned Rosalia.

“ No, now I think on’t,” said the girl, “ I’ll talk with him as little as I can help ; for, do you know, Senora, when he took my hand, and made me go into that dismal room to dinner, he did so laugh at me for being frightened, and made me sit down, and helped me to such nice bits, and gave me some wine, and called me the prettiest girl in all Catalonia. Now I could not help being vexed with his talk, but I didn’t say any thing. Then he grew grave all of a sudden, and asked me what made you, Senora, come along with me ? I was ashamed, and refused to tell him how frightened I was ; but at last he made me tell,
and

and then, dear, how he did laugh again! so I didn't eat much dinner; and he wanted me to drink more wine, but I wouldn't; so then, Senora, he began to talk about you, and said you would soon go off with the cavalier; and, says he, 'I don't think she will take you along with her, and then what will become of you, my pretty Agnes?—You would not like to go back to Barcelona, would you?'—No, says I, I'm afraid I was too great a burthen on my aunt, and now I'm come out to service, I may as well continue to earn my own living. But I think the Senora won't refuse to take me with her, she is so good and so kind. It was very bold of me to say so, to be sure, Senora; but then I thought if I was to pray you to take me, you would not refuse. However Pedro looked surly at my saying so, and said—'The Senora shall never take you, if she goes.'—Then again he looked very kind, and said a thousand fine things that I didn't understand; but at last he asked me, if I could like him, and

would be his wife?—Now, Senora, I have been used to see Pedro come sometimes to his mother's, and he never used to take much notice of me till within these two years, and I always used to like him as if he was my father or my uncle, so I was quite frightened when he asked me to marry him. He looked very hard at me when he asked me that question, and then began to look very cross. But I beg pardon, Senora, for troubling you with all he said: however, he kept persuading me to marry him, and I kept crying: this made him very angry, and so he was till he began to think the Senor wanted him, and then he was very kind again, and said he would give me time to think of his offer, and then he kept me till he thought my eyes would not shew I had been crying. So then he suffered me to come to you, after charging me, for my life, not to tell you what had passed. And now, dear Senora, hadn't we best get away as fast as we can?—Oh, if you did but know what a sad story there
is

is told about this wing," added Agnes, with an earnestness so evidently meant to excite alarm in Rosalia, and enforce her own advice, that had the least mistrust of her sincerity lurked in the mind of the latter, the marks of ingenuousness she had just given would have banished it.

The idea that she might probably hear some tale relating to the caverns, now induced Rosalia to enquire what the sad story was?

"Why, Senora," returned Agnes, with a serious air, "there are so many of them, that I don't know which to tell first. But, however, this wing of the castle has been shut up these many, many years; for they say it is so badly haunted, that nobody can live in it; and so all the doors opening to this part were shut up, to hinder the ghosts from coming out; and so, Senora, they are *all* here," added Agnes, looking fearfully around, and drawing nearer to the low sofa on which Rosalia was seated. "But as I was saying, Senora," she resumed—

then paused—"I don't know which to tell you. Oh, there's the shocking story of the Knight and his Lady, that were murdered in the tower chamber; and then there's the——but that isn't the most horrid; and you'd rather hear the *most horrid*, wouldn't you, Senora?"

Rosalia, smiling at the ingenuity with which Agnes heightened her own terrors, said—

"Tell that which you most perfectly recollect, Agnes."

"Well then, Senora,——"

Steps were now heard in the corridor, and in a few moments Pedro entered. He speedily removed the scarcely tasted repast, and then returned with oil for the lamps. Rosalia observed that his attention was now wholly directed to Agnes, who, shrinking from his oblique looks, asked her lady's leave to go and adjust her chamber.

"I am going thither, follow me," said Rosalia, retiring from the apartment.—

Pedro, however, staid there loitering about the lamps as long as he could, and then withdrew.

A few minutes afterwards, a loud knocking, that seemed to proceed from Agnes's room, startled Rosalia, who expressing surprise at this circumstance, the girl said—

“ It is only Pedro, Senora, nailing the frames of the casements in the tapestry room ; they were so shaken by the wind, that I was afraid they would burst in, and so he said he would fasten them.”

Pedro continued in the chamber for a considerable time ; and Rosalia, not chusing to suffer Agnes to repeat any of her wonderful tales while he staid in that part of the castle, stood at the window, mournfully gazing on the sublime and wild prospects, now partially illuminated by the rays of the setting sun, while Agnes busied herself in placing every thing in the apartment in the most exact order.

Rosalia was, however, soon recalled from

her reveries, by Agnes exclaiming—"Oh, blessed saints! look here, Senora."

Rosalia turned, and saw Agnes holding open a door, which had hitherto escaped notice, being concealed by a high and heavy arm chair.

Having stepped forward, Rosalia found herself at the entrance of a large closet, fitted up as an oratory. She entered the holy recess with pious awe. Upon a rich altar stood a crucifix of white marble, and above that appeared an exquisitely fine painting of the Ascension. Several other pictures, evidently by the first Italian masters, adorned the walls. The high arched window, which was coloured with scriptural subjects, admitted a varied light, which threw an impressive solemnity on every object.

Rosalia now felt as if she had discovered a safe retreat from all evil. Her heart beat with emotions of devout hope, and at the foot of the altar, she offered up fervent prayers for protection and deliverance.

With

With her mind much tranquillized, she quitted the oratory, and proceeded to the apartment in which she usually sat.

“ See, Senora,” cried Agnes, as Rosalia entered the room, “ see what has been done while you were praying to our holy mother, and I was sitting in the bed-chamber, Pedro came in here, and lighted the lamps, and laid supper. Didn’t you hear him call me softly?—Dear, I was afraid to go to him, but I didn’t dare to disturb you! so I went, and he spoke very kind to me, and said, he was sure I hadn’t been so foolish as to tell you any thing. Then he said he was very sorry he could not see me any more that night, for the Senor was very ill, and wanted him. He didn’t stay ten minutes, Senora, and seemed in a great fluster about his Lord; and said that some women were very capricious and unkind, for all their beauty and charms, and didn’t deserve all the sorrow the Senor suffered about them. Then he gave me a lamp to light me to my own room,
and

and said he had made a nice fire for me there, and bid me not be frightened, for that I should be very comfortable. But for all that," continued Agnes, "I tremble at the thought of going there; and I'm glad Pedro brought in plenty of billets when he lit the fire in this room, for I am sure, Senora, if it was to burn out while you stay, I could not find courage to go there by myself, if I was to die for't."

While Rosalia sat at supper, Agnes continued to express her terrors; and at length said—"Don't be angry with me, Senora, but do please to suffer me to sleep on the couch in your chamber. Indeed, Senora, I wont make the least noise to disturb you."

Compassion for the feelings of the girl, who was really as much impressed with fright as she appeared to be, induced Rosalia to comply with this request; and Agnes, overjoyed at the indulgence, soon forgot all her troubles.

The slight meal of Rosalia was soon finished;

finished ; and Agnes, being now permitted to eat of the refreshments with which the table was spread, made ample amends for the abstemiousness of her lady.

While Agnes, according to the instructions she had received from Pedro, was employed in removing the remains of the repast into the antichamber, the heavy bell of the castle tolled the hour of repose.— Absorbed in deep reflection, Rosalia attended not to the passing sounds. The return of Agnes, loaded with wood, and the bustle she made in arranging the billets over the glowing embers, interrupted her reveries.

The wood soon kindled, and the bright blaze threw a cheering warmth around.— Rosalia, not disposed to retire, drew her chair nearer the hearth. Agnes kept at a distance.

“ You mentioned, I think,” said Rosalia, turning to her attendant, “ that Pedro had departed for the night?”

“ Yes,

“Yes, Senora,” replied Agnes, “so he told me.”

“Then as we need not fear interruption,” rejoined Rosalia, “you may now begin to relate one of the tales of the ghosts that inhabit this wing of the castle.”

Agnes drew nigh; she turned pale—“Isn’t this the hour we should not dare to talk about them, Senora?” she fearfully whispered Rosalia, who could not forbear smiling at her fears.

Agnes, gathering courage from the looks of her lady, and throwing a glance around the apartment, the cheerful aspect of which helped to revive her spirits, she said—“I thought, Senora, you didn’t seem sleepy, so I brought in wood; and it was well I made up the fire, for if the room was not so light, I dare not say a word about the ghosts, for the life of me. And now, Senora,” continued she, drawing nearer to Rosalia, “now I will tell you the last terrible thing that happened in this part of
the

the castle. About seven years ago, there was a young woman of Barcelona came here to live as a servant. She was a very merry girl, I have heard my cousin say, and was never afraid of any thing: so when she came to live at the castle, she used to laugh at all the stories about the ghosts, and said it was a shame that the fine apartments here should be going to ruin, and all for nothing. So at last her talking came to the Senor's ears, and he sent for her to the grand saloon, and asked if she was really not afraid of ghosts?—She said she was not, and so the Senor gave her a key, and said he admired her courage, but he would not believe it, he said, without she would go alone, at midnight, all over the south wing."

Agnes paused—looked fearfully around the apartment—then resumed her relation.

"Well, Senora, Inis, that was the young woman's name, took the key, and promised the Senor that she would be sure to go, and thanked him for giving her leave.—

Dear,

Dear, dear, how bold she was!—Well, Senora, the night came; and a few minutes before the dismal hour, when, they say, the ghosts are sure to walk, Inis took a lamp and the key with her, and the Senor himself went with her to the little—little Gothic door—that's the name they call the door—and she went into a black marble hall; and there the Senor left her all alone—all alone in the black hall: but that's the best part of the story—dear, I tremble to think on't. Well, Senora, no more was heard of Inis till the next day. Now the Senor had told her not to tell any of the servants what she was going to do, and so it was all a secret to them; and so when they missed her, they were all in such a fluster, and some of them went and told the Senor that Inis was lost; and so the Senor looked grave, and said, he didn't wonder at it: and then he told them how Inis had been so bold as to venture into the south wing. Well, all the servants, when they heard that, crossed themselves, and

and made no doubt but that the spirits had carried her away. Then the Senor asked them to go there and look for her; but not one of them, for all the Senor was so good a master, would stir; so he was forced to send for his Confessor, Father—— Father——I forget his name, who lives at a convent about two leagues up the mountains. Well, when the good friar came, he went with the Senor, Don Hernandez, to the south wing; all the servants followed as far as the little door Inis went in at, and there was only one of them all had courage to go in, and that was my cousin Pedro; and it was that made Don Hernandez like my cousin ever after.”

“Did they find Inis?” enquired Rosalia.

“I’ll tell you, Senora, all in a few minutes,” returned Agnes. “Well, the friar, Don Hernandez, and Pedro, went through all the rooms which open on the corridor, and at last they went into the tower; and there, Senora, in the middle chamber, laying on the ground, and as cold as death, they

they found Inis: the Senor shook his head, and then helped to carry her into the black marble hall, and there, after a great deal to do, she came to herself."

"Be more brief, Agnes," said Rosalia—"what had alarmed the poor young woman?"

"Enough, Senora," returned Agnes, in an under tone; "if she had had twenty lives, it was enough to take them all; but she didn't tell then—it was three days before she *could* tell it."

"What did she then say?" enquired Rosalia.

"Why then, Senora, she said—Dear Senora," faltered Agnes, "I am afraid to tell what she said: the ghosts may be now in this room, and if they hear me——"

"Dismiss these simple fears," interrupted Rosalia, "and proceed."

"Well, Senora, if you will hear what she said," returned Agnes, trembling as she spoke, "why then she said, that she had examined a good many rooms, and
thought

thought them very grand—that is, that they *had* been very grand, and that the dust and the damp had spoiled all the fine things in them; and then she went into the room that I was to sleep in, there, she said, she did feel a little odd, as she stood looking at the tapestry—the huge Knights, Senora, and the ugly Moors, all bleeding, and the horses with their fiery eyes, are very terrible. Well, she was standing looking at them, when she thought she saw a light; she turned round, and in the large dressing glass, she saw the figure of a woman dressed all in white, with a flame on her head, and flames on her hands.”

Agnes now turned so pale, and her voice became so thick, that Rosalia requested her to stop, and obliged her to take a little water.

The self-terrified girl, somewhat revived, again proceeded with her marvellous relation.

“ Well, Senora, you may guess what a
fright

fright Inis was in ; but she had the courage, for all that, to look stoutly at the terrible figure, which she saw walk slowly across the room, and then it violently drew open the curtains of the bed, the *purple bed*, Senora, and there——Holy Mary, there lay a cavaliero, and a lady by his side, both dead, and covered with wounds ; and the figure in white stood lamenting over them. Well, Senora, when this frightful figure had done mourning, it turned to Inis, and beckoned to her to follow it. Inis did not dare to disobey, and so followed the figure into one of the tower chambers. When they came there, the figure went up to a closet, still beckoning Inis to follow, who did as it wished ; but when she came there, the figure pointed to a skeleton that lay on the floor in the closet, and in a hollow voice, said—‘ Look,’—and Inis did look ; and then the figure said—‘ These bones are mine ; I murdered the cavaliero and the lady in the purple bed, and then killed myself. When you leave these

these apartments, you must make a pilgrimage to the Lady of Loretto, and pray for our souls.' So after saying that, the ghost vanished in a flame of fire; then the tower shook terribly, and all the casements were shattered to pieces: so Inis lost all her courage, and fell into a fit, and there she was in that way till the Senor, Don Hernandez, went to see what was become of her! And now, Senora, don't you think *I* should have lost my life too, if I had slept in the purple bed?"

"Did the poor girl die of the fright?" exclaimed Rosalia.

"Die, Senora, no, not just *then*. She died some time after she came back from her pilgrimage; she turned nun, Senora, in the convent of our Lady, at Barcelona."

"And from whom did you hear this wonderful tale, Agnes?"

"O dear, I heard it from Pedro, once when he was at Barcelona. I remember, too, that night, that my aunt said, it was a great pity that such a fine handsome man as the
Senor

Señor Don Hernandez didn't marry. So, Pedro laughed and said, the ghost that haunted the south wing and tower of the castle, was wife enough for him, and so he told that story about Inis. I remember every word he said: there are a great many other stories about this wing, but not quite so terrible as that. But you don't want to hear any more to-night, do you, Senora?"

"No, Agnes," replied Rosalia, who considered the marvellous events she had been listening to, as merely the effects of a disordered imagination, and the heroine of the tale as one who, boasting of courage and fortitude much more than, in reality, she possessed, had found herself fearfully impressed with the silence and gloom which, at the hour of midnight, reigned in the deserted chambers through which she had wandered; and possibly, having recollected the strange stories she might have heard respecting that part of the edifice, her terrors had overpowered her senses,

senses, and that, when restored to animation, her mind being still affected by what she had imagined occurred to herself in the south wing, she had then represented as fact, that which, when there, she had only fancied.

“ Shall I place some more wood on the fire, Senora ? ” asked Agnes, who observed the bright blaze diminishing.

“ No, ” returned Rosalia, “ it is time to retire. ” She then arose from her seat, and Agnes, taking a lamp, lighted her to the chamber, where she soon retired to rest ; and Agnes afterwards took possession of a large couch that stood at a small distance from her lady’s bed.

CHAP. IX.

ON the following morning, Pedro again made his appearance, bringing in the morning repast. Before he withdrew, he respectfully asked permission of Rosalia for Agnes to step with him into the anti-chamber.

Rosalia silently assented to this request, and Agnes followed her cousin. She had left the room only a few minutes, when suddenly the door opened, and Don Hernandez entered.

Rosalia, at that moment, would have flown to her chamber, had not the dread of his pursuing her thither caused her to remain

remain where she was, while her countenance and air plainly expressed the indignant sense she entertained of this insulting intrusion.

Don Hernandez appeared dejected, yet agitated. He advanced with an air of profound respect, and after a short pause, during which he regarded her with a mournful and embarrassed look, he said—

“Be not either alarmed or offended, Lady Rosalia ; I have dared thus to intrude only to solicit your forgiveness of the improper language I presumed to address to you yesterday morning. To apologize for the wild and cruel scheme I employed to tear you from your relations, would be the height of insolence : my penitence for that rash and foolish action, can be proved only by restoring you to the arms of your family, and——”

While speaking, the agitation of Don Hernandez visibly encreased ; his voice faltered ; he suddenly paused, and walked to the window.

Rosalia, whose resentment was now yielding to the mingled sensations of surprise, hope, and joy, sat silently regarding him. At length she timidly said—

“Your present determination, Don Hernandez, obliterates the recollection of my sufferings. This act of justice——”

“You forgive me, then,” exclaimed Hernandez, suddenly advancing—“you forgive me, Lady Rosalia,” he repeated, while his fine features seemed animated with rapture. “Oh, ascribe my conduct yesterday, to the distraction I endured at the idea of being the object of your scorn. But you pardon my presumption; and when we part—perhaps for ever—I will console myself with the hope that the sacrifice I now make may hereafter restore me to your friendship. Oh! Lady Rosalia, you know not how much I loved; no common passion urged me to these degrading steps. I hoped that when in my power, I should find you not insensible of my ardent tenderness. But I distress you:

I will

I will learn to submit to my destiny: believe the sincerity of my repentance.—It is true,” added he, “that existence without you will be a burthen. You are devoted to another, and I ought to have known you would bestow your hand only where you had placed your affections. I once fondly imagined that gratitude for the restoration of a long lost and amiable brother, had alone inclined you to yield to the wishes of the Marchese, and become the inestimable reward of Guidoni.”

During this speech, Rosalia, confused, attempted not to speak. When Don Hernandez ceased, she intimated her hope that he intended permitting her to quit the castle immediately.

Hernandez looked distressed at this enquiry. “To prove my sincerity, I would most certainly suffer you to depart this moment; but at present *I* cannot leave Spain, and to trust you to the care of servants, would be the height of imprudence on my part, and extremely derogatory to

your own rank. My residence here is required by the government. The Catalans, ever inclined to revolt, need the continual inspection of some friend to the King; and I dare not disobey the orders I have received, which are secretly to attend to any marks of disaffection I may at any time perceive. These instructions I am able to fulfil, as my castle, though well fortified, bears no marks of warlike preparations. I am not here surrounded by troops, yet chosen bands await my summons, should I see occasion for their presence.

“ But though I cannot leave the castle,” continued Hernandez, “ I will immediately write to the Marchese. The resentment of your family, Lady Rosalia, I am prepared to meet; I have deserved their just indignation: can you, then, consent to await the arrival of the Marchese and your brother?—I cannot include that of the Count Guidoni; I cannot express my desire to see *him* of the party. I do not pretend

pretend to virtues above humanity ; I could not behold Guidoni without distraction, for have I not now resigned *you* to him ?”

The wild fury which now flashed from the eyes of Hernandez, terrified Rosalia, who, with a degree of horror that chilled her heart, already anticipated the dreadful result of a meeting between her relatives and Hernandez. After several ineffectual efforts to restrain her emotions, she faintly articulated—

“ Suffer me, Don Hernandez, to request you will permit me instantly to seek an asylum in some convent at a distance from the castle. I will then myself acquaint my dear father with my situation. Your encountering my beloved brother and the Marchese, might ruin my future peace. Oh do not entertain the idea of seeing either ; permit me to hasten to a convent.”

Hernandez was silent ; his agitation had rather subsided. At length, “ how wretched am I !” he exclaimed ; “ I perceive you have no confidence in my honour ; yet

what proofs of sincerity am I not ready to give you?—I cannot but regret that I know of no convent where you might be agreeably accommodated; and yet I cannot presume to expect you will honour my castle with your presence.”

Hernandez paused, as if considering, while Rosalia observed him with the most anxious attention.

“No,” he resumed, after a silence of some minutes, “I cannot, at present, recollect any convent. Will you, Lady Rosalia, consent to remain my guest for a few days, and in the mean while I will make enquiries? I have no doubt of succeeding to your wishes, and I will then for ever bid adieu to you and happiness. Remain, Lady Rosalia, let me entreat you to remain a few days. For your sake I will not address the Marchese. Yet if you persist in the desire of immediately withdrawing from my protection, and consigning yourself to strangers, it will then be my duty to acknowledge my conduct to your friends,

friends, and apprize them of the steps you have taken. I lay no restraint, however, on your actions, but such as prudence justifies; you have already suffered too much through my folly.

“And now, Lady Rosalia,” continued Hernandez, without waiting her reply to his propositions, “let me request you to pay some attention to your health. I have taken the liberty to order a lute, and a small selection of the works of those authors whom I have heard you admire, to be brought to your apartments. I will not intrude during the few days this castle is rendered so blessed as to contain you.—The key,” added he, “which I shall also take the liberty of sending, unlocks the arched door of the black marble hall. If you chuse a solitary ramble, for I dare not request permission to attend you, by following the path shaded by ash and elm trees, it will conduct you to the summit of the rocks, that form a barrier on this side of the castle. You will meet with no

interruption in your walks, nor will you even be observed. No part of the edifice, but this hitherto uninhabited side, commands a view of those rocks; nor do any of my domestics ever approach them, as they lay without the castle walls: you have, therefore, nothing to apprehend from idle curiosity. I mention this circumstance, as I presume to imagine, lady, that you would wish the same secrecy to be continued, that has hitherto attended your residence here. I would I could recall the past, but that is impossible; and as I never can hope to have the infinite happiness of presenting you to my domestics, as their future lady, I will most effectually guard your delicacy from being affected by their curiosity: they are ignorant of your being an inmate of this castle. The people I employed in conveying you hither are not of this country. The female, known to you by the name of Zellida, has returned to Italy. To my confidential servant only, your being here is known.—

The

The moment I learn in what convent you can be accommodated according to your rank, you shall be privately conveyed thither. Oh look not so," he continued, with great emotion, "look not thus distressed. I feel most keenly that I should have died rather than have exposed you to these troubles, but, alas! I listened to the delusions of hope, and have undone myself!"

Don Hernandez then added several incoherent expressions of remorse and contrition; and at length, as if no longer able to contend with his own sensations, he bowed, and hurried from the apartment, leaving Rosalia overwhelmed with perplexity and terror.

Before she could collect her confused ideas, Agnes hastily entered the room.—The air and look of the girl, which implied she had something of importance to communicate, attracted the attention of Rosalia, who had just opened her lips to enquire the cause of her flurried appearance, when Agnes prevented her with—

“He was here, Senora, wasn’t he?”

“If you mean Don Hernandez, Agnes, he was,” replied Rosalia, both surprised at the question and anxious to know why it had been asked.

“And he has told you he would let you go away, Senora, hasn’t he? eagerly enquired Agnes.

“He has indeed,” returned Rosalia, with encreased surprise.

“Oh, Saint Dominic!” exclaimed Agnes, “don’t believe a word he said. No, they may *kill* me, but they shan’t make me as bad as themselves.”

“What do you mean, Agnes?” enquired Rosalia, pale and agitated.

“Why, Senora, you shall hear,” replied the girl: “you know you gave me leave to go with Pedro into the antichamber: Well, when I was there, he said I must go with him into the marble hall, for the Senor Don Hernandez wanted to see me. I didn’t like to go with Pedro, and when he saw *that*, he looked quite gruff, and
said

said he would go that instant and tell the Senor I would not attend his commands. Well, then, Senora, I couldn't help thinking Pedro was speaking truth, and so I went with him into the hall, but there was nobody there : so then I began to tell Pedro, that it was very wicked of him to tell such a story, as that Don Hernandez wanted me ; but he only laughed at me, and began talking about you. And now, Senora," continued Agnes, " perhaps you may be very angry with me, but indeed it is the first time I ever was deceitful in my life ; but when that Pedro began to talk about you, I couldn't help listening quietly, to find out, if I could, what Don Hernandez meant to do. Well, after that, he asked me many questions, about how you liked your apartments?—and what you said?—and whether you was crying to-day?—and a great deal more. So I guessed he wanted only to find out if you had said any thing to me ; and so I said, Senora, that you very seldom used to speak to me, but when I was attending you, and

and that I didn't see you crying—and this satisfied Pedro. Then he asked me, how I liked you? and I said, very well.

‘ If that's the case,’ said he, ‘ your fortune may be made. Now Agnes,’ says he, looking very grave, ‘ I well know that you could always keep a secret ; but remember, if you discover what I am going to tell you, you will lose your life, instead of always attending the lady, and making your own fortune.’

“ He then went on and told me, that the story of your having run away with a cavaliero from Italy, was all a sham—that Don Hernandez adored you—that you had promised to marry him, but, instead of keeping your promise, you were going to wed another. Then Pedro went on telling me, that I must watch you closely, and tell every thing you said and did, to him. Well, Senora, I listened to him, to be sure, and nodded my head every time, as if I intended to promise all he asked of me: then I pretended you would want me, and

strove to get away from him ; but he prevented me, and told me, that I mustn't return so soon to your apartments, for that the Senor was then with you, Senora, making your mind easy, by promising to you that you should go away in a little time. And will he let her ? said I, quite surprised. Pedro laughed, but said nothing. Indeed, Senora, I did not want him to speak, for I understood his laugh and his look in a minute. So he began again warning me to mind what you did ; and just at that minute Don Hernandez came down the stairs into the marble hall. As he passed, he looked at me and smiled, and said Pedro had told him I was a faithful, good girl, and if I served him with fidelity, he would amply reward me. Well, when the Senor was gone, Pedro said he couldn't dine with me in my own room to-day, but he would take care I should have something very good ; so I told him that you, Senora, had given me leave to eat in the antichamber, and that I did not like to leave your apartments,
for

for fear you might want me when I was away. Pedro looked very cross at that; but he said—

‘ Well, well, it doesn’t signify for the present, because I can’t come so often as I wish. The Senora may soon know her own interest, and then my little Agnes will learn to be good-natured and obliging too.’

“ So then, Senora, he strove to look very kind and sweet, and bade me remember to watch you well, and he would take care to make me as rich and as happy as a queen; then I got away from him and ran here. And now, Senora,” added Agnes, “ you see how cunning they are; and, if I might dare to advise, I would say—be as cunning as they, and make the best use of the time in contriving to get away from this frightful place as fast as one can, Senora.”

Rosalia, who had listened to the communications of Agnes with great emotion, plainly shewed, by her pallid looks, how greatly shocked she was at the duplicity practised

practised by Don Hernandez, yet she felt truly grateful to Heaven that his designs were so completely revealed; and though she abhorred dissimulation, yet, on reflection, she felt, that by appearing ignorant of his artifices, she might, with more security, endeavour to effect her escape. This consideration determined her to conceal her knowledge of the circumstances Agnes had related; and, by exerting her utmost efforts to assume a composed demeanour, she hoped to dissipate any idea Hernandez might be inclined to entertain of her suspecting the insincerity of his protestations of restoring her to her friends.

The artless proofs which Agnes continued to give of a faithful and zealous attachment, firmly established her in the good opinion and confidence of Rosalia. In the warmest terms she commended the generous conduct of the girl, who felt the happiness she enjoyed in acting right, heightened by the grateful praise she now received.

The sound of steps in the anti-chamber interrupted

interrupted Rosalia. Agnes, on a look from her lady, instantly quitted the apartment, and met Pedro, who was loaded with books and a lute, both of which he gave into her charge, slyly smiling, and winking at the time. Poor Agnes was but little inclined to relish the joyous looks of her cousin; she took the things without seeming to notice his significant glances, and hastened back to her lady.

“ See, Senora !” exclaimed Agnes, displaying the lute, “ look, pray look, what a beautiful lute the Senor has sent, and such a sight of books ! reading books and music books—so Pedro said. Where shall I put them, Senora ? Ah !” continued she, shaking her head, “ Don Hernandez thinks he has *us* safe enough ; how mad he will be if we should be able to disappoint him ! Dear, dear, how I do long to get away ! but where shall I put the books, Senora ?”

“ Range them on the marble table,” replied Rosalia.

While Agnes was executing this order,
Rosalia,

Rosalia, too well convinced that she had nothing to hope from either the honour, the justice, or the humanity of Don Hernandez, sat considering whether or not she should, that night, endeavour to take a survey of the deserted apartments adjoining the suite she occupied. It was possible, she thought, some passage leading to a remote staircase might present itself beyond these rooms, by the latter of which she might, at the dead hour of night, descend, to examine the lower apartments belonging to this unfrequented part of the edifice : beset with evils she shuddered to think of, she felt that expedition in her designs would be highly necessary ; and, without further hesitation on the subject which employed her thoughts, she resolved to commence her search that very night.

Having communicated her intentions to Agnes, the superstitious fears of the latter were so completely awakened by the unexpected declaration, that she earnestly besought Rosalia not to venture into the tower.

tower. At length, however, her terrors yielded to the remonstrances and wishes of her lady, joined to her own ardent desire of shewing a ready obedience to the will of a lady, to whom she was really attached—who had treated her with far more kindness than she had ever experienced from her nearest relatives—and who had promised, in case she regained her liberty, to afford her protection for life.

Perceiving the tremors of Agnes had begun to subside, Rosalia, who had often been on the point of questioning her respecting the tradition relative to the secret caverns, now introduced the subject; but the simple girl had never heard of them—a few vague and unsatisfactory tales, connected with the south wing of the castle, was all she knew.

Stedfast in her resolves, Rosalia watched, with impatience, the approach of night; every hour seemed an age; the agitation of her mind prevented her tasting of any one of the delicacies with which the table
was

was spread for dinner—silent and anxious, she sat, marking the declining sun-beams sinking down the western sky. Darkness at length threw her mantle over the earth, and Rosalia beheld Pedro withdraw, after serving in supper, with more satisfaction than she had ever experienced on a similar occasion.

The remaining hours lagged heavily, and she soon sunk into a deep reverie, in which she continued till the solemn-toned clock proclaimed the arrival of the hour, when all the inhabitants of the castle might be supposed to have forgot the cares and fatigues of the day in refreshing slumbers.

Hastily she threw on her veil, and, taking a lamp, quitted the apartments, followed by the trembling Agnes. They proceeded slowly along the corridor, trying several doors as they passed, all of which were fastened. When arrived at that which opened into the south tower, Rosalia paused; and, observing that the pale countenance of Agnes exhibited strong marks of

of

of terror, she said—"You may return, Agnes, if your alarms will not allow you to proceed;" but the poor girl persisted in accompanying her dear Senora. Rosalia attempted to open the door; this was also locked.

"Unfortunate!" exclaimed Rosalia, in a tone of extreme disappointment—"I am undone—we must return!"

"O no, Senora, perhaps not," cried Agnes, "for I now recollect that when Pedro was shewing me where to find the wood, I saw a large bunch of rusty keys laying in a corner of the closet; but I am afraid to go there alone."

Rosalia instantly led the way.

As she entered the tapestry room, she was forcibly struck with its singularly gloomy appearance, and was not surprised at that apartment having been selected as the scene of terrific tales.

Having found the keys, they hurried from the room, and again found themselves in the corridor. Rosalia, after vainly applying several

several of these keys to the lock of the door she first approached, at length found one which turned in it, and in a moment the door yielded to her hand; she threw it open, and entered a spacious apartment.

The faint rays of the lamp, reflected by a large mirror which hung opposite the door, served merely to discover the mouldering hangings, half fallen from the damp walls, while the stillness of the hour added to the solemnity of all around.

Rosalia often paused as she slowly proceeded to lift the dark arras, to hush, at these intervals, the fears of the trembling Agnes, who, without daring to raise her eyes, kept close to her lady.

This apartment, Rosalia perceived, had been splendidly furnished, but every thing it contained was now in a state of total decay. The rich embroidered satin covers of the sofas and chairs, fell to pieces with the slightest touch, and the tapestry was so faded, that the once lively colours were no more discernible.

After

After a minute but fruitless examination of every part of this room, Rosalia and her fearful attendant proceeded, with the like scrutiny, through the whole suite, and with the like ill success.

Depressed with disappointment, Rosalia at length quitted these apartments; and, having locked the door, led the way, with light steps and beating heart, to the tower; Agnes, most sorrowfully yielding to necessity, followed her.

Passing the door of her own apartments, Rosalia thought she heard a faint noise within; she paused awhile to listen—all was silent.

“It was but my fears,” said Rosalia, moving from the spot. She then proceeded along the corridor, till she reached the door that opened into the tower: here the keys seemed of no avail; not one of the number she applied to the lock, but resisted her efforts to turn it. Dispirited and vexed, she was, for a few moments, half-inclined to give over the attempt: impelled,

impelled, however, by an irresistible impulse, she again tried the keys; and, using less hurry than before, at length found one that seemed, from its rusty condition, to require the exertion of strength only to make the lock yield. This the ardour of hope imparted to the delicate hands of Rosalia; she heard with pleasure the grating sounds, and felt a degree of triumph as the massy door fell back on its creaking hinges.

“ Now, Agnes,” said she, turning to her young attendant, who stood pale as death, trembling and irresolute, “ I again request you to return; I am not afraid to enter *alone* into the tower. Poor girl,” continued she, compassionating the visible terror of Agnes, “ do not be so much alarmed; I will go back with you, and leave you in my apartments.”

“ O Santa Ursula—defend us—do you think—me, Senora—so wicked as to let you—venture by yourself—into this *horror-some* place!” exclaimed Agnes, while

her chattering teeth and impeded utterance proved her alarm and dread to be excessive.

Rosalia, though pleased with the persevering and affectionate attention of Agnes, had too much pity for her to desire any further proofs. She repeated her offer of going back with her to the apartments; but Agnes, notwithstanding her terrors, would follow the steps of her "dear Senora."

Having now entered on a wide landing-place, into which three doors opened, one of which was a-jar, Agnes touched the arm of Rosalia, and in a trembling voice whispered her—

"That's the room, Senora—where Inis saw the ghost. I heard Pedro say it was the middle room."

"Then we will enter it the first, Agnes," returned Rosalia, "and our fears will be sooner over."

"I hope so, Senora," said Agnes, with a bitter sigh.

"How fortunate that we have no occasion

sion to lose time with trying keys here," said Rosalia, as she entered the apartment, which, though not large, was gloomy in the extreme. A lofty bed, hung with crimson satin, edged with deep gold fringe, now soiled and tarnished, and a heavy counterpane of the same colour, highly embroidered and fringed, laying half off the bed, while the rest of the furniture lay broken and scattered about, proved this room to have been long destitute of an inhabitant. While throwing a glance around, her attention was suddenly attracted by a dagger, half covered with rust, laying near the black marble hearth of a wide fire-place.

Agnes also had espied the dreadful weapon; and, after crossing herself and ejaculating a devout petition to all the saints she could think of, she faltered out—

" Oh! *this is—this is* the room—Senora—look—look, there's the *closet!*—don't go near it—O, do come away, Senora.

Indeed—I am sure we shall find no way to get away here.”

Rosalia looked towards the opposite end of the room, and saw a door of ebony, highly carved, standing half open. The excessive gloom of the apartment, and the sight of the dagger, not the tale she had heard, though it now occurred to her recollection, caused her to feel rather terrified; yet this weakness did not long continue. The dread of failing in so important an object, as that which had brought her into the room, supported her spirits, and she commenced a strict examination of the chamber; but here her anxious search was as unsuccessful as her former ones. The closet yet remained to be explored. Rosalia cast a timid glance towards it: ashamed of her own fears, however, she endeavoured to summon courage to enter it. The sight of the dagger had caused her no small alarm; and, though she could not yield belief to the marvellous tale Agnes had

had

had related, yet she began to think that it was not improbable but that some deed of horror had been perpetrated in this desolate tower—the dagger being there, fully authorised such a conjecture.—“And yet,” thought Rosalia, after a momentary pause of irresolution, “shall I suffer myself to be thus intimidated by idle terrors of imaginary danger, and abandon a pursuit that may, by perseverance, be crowned with success—to remain in a place where I am exposed to *real* and impending evils, of the most dreadful kind!”—A blush of self-disapprobation now glowed on her cheek; she felt her courage revived—and, hastily advancing to the closet, she threw open the door, and, glancing her eye around the inside, perceived it was entirely empty.

Poor Agnes, who, in speechless dismay, had watched the motions of her lady, no sooner saw her enter the closet, than she uttered a faint shriek, which instantly caught the attention of Rosalia, who, though smiling at her own terrors, still felt pity for

those endured by Agnes ; returning, therefore, she took the hand of the trembling girl, and drew her to the entrance of the closet, hoping that conviction would allay her distressing fears.

Agnes looked fearfully in—not seeing the skeleton mentioned by Inis, she seemed for a moment to breath more freely ; but having more faith in the story than in her own eye-sight, her terror quickly returned, and she protested, that the ghost had certainly carried away her own bones, or else they would have been still in the same place where Inis had seen them.

Rosalia smiled at the simplicity of her attendant, as she slowly moved around the closet, which was wainscotted with ebony, as richly carved as the door ; but in vain she rapped with her fingers against the panels—no hollow sound was returned, and she was soon convinced that there was no hope of finding any concealed passage there. Sighing, she quitted the closet, and stood for a moment considering whether she

she should yet have time to proceed through the adjoining apartments. While thus hesitating, Agnes, who had been gazing with encreased fear at every corner of the room, suddenly exclaimed—

“ O, dear Senora, what is that great hole in the step, which leads up to the bed ? ”

Rosalia advanced to the spot, to which Agnes had thus directed her attention, and beheld a narrow cavity in the lower step ; she stooped, and, to her great joy, perceived the opening to be the division between two sliding boards, which formed the entire front of the step, and which, on pushing further aside, she found had concealed a long flight of stone steps.

The distance, however, betwixt the flooring and the top of the step was so small, that Rosalia soon thought she had not much reason to felicitate herself on this discovery, as it appeared impossible for the most slender person to pass through this aperture. While taking a more exact

survey, she accidentally pressed her hand on the upper part of the step, and feeling it rather unsteady, it instantly occurred to her, that it was so constructed as to be raised without much difficulty; this she essayed to do, and, with some exertion, lifted a piece of the board, which formed a kind of trap door over the flight of stone steps, and now perceived an opening wide enough to admit a much larger person than herself.

The eagerness which Rosalia now felt to descend the stone steps, was checked by the fear of losing herself and Agnes, in the intricacies and vaults she might have to explore. Above two hours had already elapsed in her researches; the oil, with which her lamp had been furnished, was nearly consumed; it could not, therefore, long continue burning—and thus circumstanced, to venture she knew not where, would, she justly thought, be the excess of rashness.

While she stood thus deliberating, Agnes startled her from her reverie, by catching
fast

fast hold of her arm, and in a voice rendered inarticulate by fright, stammered out—

“ Did you hear nothing, Senora ? ”

Rosalia listened, and plainly distinguished a light footstep evidently advancing towards the apartment ; alarmed at a circumstance which appeared so extraordinary, she stood fixed to the spot. In a few moments, a tall female figure, enwrapped in long white garments, appeared at the chamber door, and, after an instantaneous pause, glided swiftly across the room—and vanished !

Agnes uttered a half-suppressed groan, and fell senseless to the floor, while Rosalia, overcome by the shock, sunk on that part of the step near which she had stood ; her fleeting senses were, however, quickly restored by a strong smell of fire. Trembling, she attempted to rise, and perceived, with horror, that the lamp, having fallen close to that end of the counterpane which lay off the bed, the flame had caught the satin, and was now running along in quick flashes,

checked here and there by the heavy embroidery. Instantly alive to this new cause of alarm, she started up, and with eager haste, threw that part of the counterpane, which the flames had not yet reached, over the burning end, and thus quickly extinguished the fire.

The attention of Rosalia being thus diverted, for a moment, from the horrible vision she had seen, she endeavoured to raise poor Agnes, who still continued insensible on the floor; it was some time, however, ere her humane efforts fully succeeded in restoring the girl to her senses; and when, at length, her recovery was effected, her terrors, which had also revived, rendered her incapable of moving.

Unmindful of herself, Rosalia continued to assist her shuddering Agnes, and with some difficulty raised her from the floor; but scarcely had the latter looked around, when a fresh cause of astonishment and fright seemed to fix her to the spot.

“ Look,

“ Look, Señora—look !” she cried, “ what is that white thing—laying there—at the foot of the bed ?”

Rosalia turned quick, and stooping, took up a large roll of paper, which she imagined had fallen from the bed, at the time when she moved the counterpane. At that moment a fluttering sound at the window so alarmed and terrified Agnes, that she fled from the chamber. Rosalia remained for an instant to close the trap door, then tremblingly followed.

With tremulous haste, she locked the door that led into the tower, and with quick, yet feeble steps, ran along the corridor, and soon found herself in her own apartments.

After fastening the door of the anti-chamber, Rosalia preceded her half lifeless attendant into the room they had quitted to proceed on their nocturnal researches. Here they found the heavy logs of wood which, previous to their leaving the apartment, Agnes had taken care to lay on the

glowing embers, diffused a bright blaze around.

The cheerful fire, the animating light, and the pleasant appearance of the room, so totally the reverse of those she had just been visiting, had a cordial effect on the spirits of Rosalia, who gradually began to recover from the alarming shock, and the deep horror she had experienced; nevertheless, neither she nor her attendant were in the least inclined to retire to rest.

Astonishment and awe still possessed the mind of Rosalia, while poor Agnes looked the pale image of dismay. For a length of time the affrighted girl was incapable of uttering a single word; and when, at length, she regained the faculty of speech, she continued to rave of the figure she had seen, insisting that it was the very same ghost that had scared Inis to death.

“ Didn’t you see the flames about it, Senora ?” was a question she several times repeated, while her eyes wandered round the apartment, as if in momentary expectation

tation of again beholding the supernatural visitant.

Most assuredly Rosalia had perceived a light shining round the figure, but how that effect was produced, was more than she had been able to ascertain; she, therefore, remained silent, while Agnes continued her enquiries.

“ And didn’t you see its head, Senora ? ” she ran on.—“ O if you had looked up at its head—you would have seen another flame there. O it was—it is the ghost—that haunts this—this horrorsome wing, at one time—and that old tumbling down tower at another ! ”

Notwithstanding her alarm and terror at the moment, Rosalia had observed that the visage of the figure was partly concealed ; but, respecting the flame on her head, she now confessed that, to have noticed *that*, Agnes must have been more exact in her observations than she had been.

“ The slight view I caught of the form, whether an inhabitant of this world or the other,”

other," added Rosalia, " renders it impossible for me to speak decidedly on its appearance."

In despite of every attempt the compassionating Rosalia made to soothe the terrors of Agnes, the lamentations and fears of the latter continued till the morning had advanced, and the enlivening rays of the sun, obliquely darting through the casements, had illumed the apartment: the poor girl then sunk into a convulsed slumber; but Rosalia could not lose the keen sensibility of her own situation in sleep. The singular appearance she had beheld in the tower chamber, had excited the most awful reflections; and these, mingled with a harrowing sense of the dangers that surrounded her, kept her mind in a state of continual emotion.

Rosalia was not wholly free from the superstition of the times; and though her good sense had taught her to smile at the strange tale related by Agnes, yet she was now compelled to credit the truth of it,
having

having just met with so terrible a conviction ; for surely, she thought, it was no human being who, at that hour, had entered the gloomy and deserted tower—who had so suddenly vanished in a room, which, having previously and attentively examined, she was certain afforded no means of retreat, except by the door at which the mysterious figure had entered, or by the private steps she had discovered. All the doors leading to the inhabited part of the castle were fastened up, except that at which Pedro entered, and even that was never unlocked, but when he had occasion to pass through : every circumstance seemed to confirm the horrible fact ; and the more Rosalia reflected, the more she was convinced, that some restless, disembodied spirit wandered through the forsaken and dreary apartments. The recollection of the dagger she had seen on the hearth, suggested terrifying images : she shuddered, and vainly endeavoured to chase from her mind,

mind, ideas which were no less a source of grief than of horror.

She had just made a discovery which, if pursued, might present a way, no matter how difficult, of escaping from the power of the unprincipled Hernandez. The stone steps could be originally designed for no other purpose than, in case of danger, to favour escape; it was, therefore, probable that they might lead to the caverns, if indeed there was any truth in the tradition respecting those retreats, and from thence beyond the castle walls; yet how could she gain courage to enter an apartment where she might again sustain a similar shock—courage to encounter all the terrors that might await her, in the drear intricacies in which she might be bewildered?

The dread surmise of the latter circumstance befalling her, should she even summon fortitude to descend the steps, so forcibly operated on the mind of Rosalia, as to compel her to abandon all hope of
regaining

regaining her liberty by such hazardous means; yet, having for a moment indulged the pleasing idea, it was agony to totally relinquish it. Her tears now flowed fast, and ceased not, till a whispering voice within reminded her of the Gracious Power, on whom only she should fix dependence—who, from the depths of wretchedness, could, in an instant, raise her to the summit of felicity—and who, were she encompassed with evils unconquerable by human means, could as instantly snatch her from the midst of them. The depression which before lay heavy on her heart, now vanished; and, repairing to the oratory, she there offered up the devout effusions of her soul to the All-gracious Being, whose dispensations flow from infinite wisdom and boundless love.

Having thus recovered composure of mind, Rosalia retired to her chamber, and her strength being nearly exhausted by her late alarms, wanderings, and want of rest, she

she soon lost all recollection of the past in a calm and refreshing slumber.

When Rosalia awoke, she perceived Agnes, whom, before she retired, she had awakened, and ordered to go to bed, sitting by the bedside, with a countenance that plainly shewed she had not yet overcome the fright of the preceding night.

“ O, dear Senora,” said the girl, “ how glad I am that you have slept so comfortably; I was afraid you would never be able to sleep quietly again. I am sure I was so frightened, when Pedro rapped at the anti-chamber door, that I was a long time before I durst open it; at last I heard his voice, and for once I was quite *glad* to hear it. Well, when he came in, Senora, he shewed me some beautiful fruit, and several other nice things, which the Senor had ordered to be brought with your coffee; and he bid Pedro say, that he hopes you will do him the honour to permit him to pay his respects to you. Now I thought
you

you would not like to see him, Senora, so I told Pedro you was very ill, and was not yet risen, but I would tell you when you waked. Would you believe it, Senora," continued Agnes, "he said I looked very ill myself, and that, if I had seen a ghost, I could not look worse: dear, how I trembled when he said so—I was afraid he had found us out, but I held my tongue; and then he began talking of his liking for me, and all that nonsense, till I told him you would hear him, and then he went away. But he has been here twice since that, and, both times, he said that his Lord was almost distracted at your being ill. Then I said that you seemed very melancholy, and that I was afraid you could not live long in this old castle.—‘O but she will, and happily too, my little Agnes,’ said Pedro.—And then he told me, as a great secret, that the Senor was to set off in a few hours for the castle of a grandee, who lives up in these mountains, about twelve leagues distance—‘And,’ says he, ‘my Lord was quite mad yesterday,

yesterday, when the letter came to call him away ; for he is afraid he can't return these six days, and so he must see the Senora before he goes.'

" And if the Senora is to go away too, what will become of me ?" says I, to hear what Pedro would say.

' Pooh !' said he, ' my Lord said she should go back to Italy, only to make her mind easy while he is away.'

The just contempt and abhorrence with which the discovery of the mean artifices employed by Hernandez had impressed the mind of Rosalia, and the resentment she now felt at his seeking to intrude again into her presence, after the assurance he had given her of forbearing his visits, had, at this moment, sufficient influence over her thoughts to banish the recollection of her late terrors. Determined not to see him, if it were possible to avoid it, she ordered Agnes to tell Pedro, in case he brought any further message, to inform his Lord, that, being much indisposed, she
must

must decline his visit. This order had not been long given, when Pedro again entered the antichamber. Agnes flew to deliver the message, and Pedro quickly withdrew, saying, as he left the apartment—"That his Lord had delayed setting off, in hopes of seeing the Senora, and that the disappointment would almost break his heart."

An hour had nearly elapsed without any further message from Don Hernandez, and Rosalia, imagining he had commenced his journey, no longer confined herself to her chamber; she had been, however, but a short time in the room she usually sat in, when she heard the outer door open, and, in less than a minute afterwards, Don Hernandez appeared.

Having apologised for his intrusion, he assured Rosalia that nothing but the distressing fears he entertained respecting her health could have induced him to violate the solemn promise he had given on his former visit.

"I perceive," he continued, fixing his eyes,

eyes, with an expression of contrite sorrow, on the pale countenance of Rosalia, "I too plainly perceive, in your looks, the effects of my most unpardonable rashness and folly. Full reparation for the past, alas! I cannot make; but what remains in my power, I will perform. You shall be restored to your friends, Lady Rosalia—the hour of your removal hence cannot be far distant; but let me entreat you meanwhile to compose your mind, and not to neglect taking the air. This," offering a key, which Rosalia not deigning to receive from his hand, he laid on the table, "this, which but for the inattention of my servant, Pedro, would have been presented to you yesterday, opens the door I mentioned, when I last had the honour of being in your presence. Farewell, Lady Rosalia," he added, with emotions that seemed to impede his utterance, "farewell—forgive and pity the most miserable of men. The sufferings I have caused you to feel, though severe, are but temporary—they will soon have

have an end; but mine—mine will last with life.”

Then casting a look of speechless anguish on Rosalia, he hastened from the apartment.

Contempt and resentment had held Rosalia silent while Hernandez remained—astonishment was now mingled with those impressions: she could scarcely conceive it possible for any human being to be so complete an adept in dissimulation as he appeared to be. That his sentiments now, respecting her destination, were the same as heretofore, she had no doubt, and, of course, could consider his immediate professions in no other light than as additional proofs of hypocrisy and deceit. That Pedro was in the entire confidence of his Lord, was sufficiently demonstrated by his being the only domestic entrusted with the knowledge of her detention in the castle, and the only person permitted to attend on her, except Agnes, who was his relation, and had been placed about her person by means of his influence with Hernandez.

But

But wherefore Pedro had been so free in his communications to the girl, especially in those particulars which related to his Lord's private sentiments and designs, had often appeared a mystery to Rosalia; yet, as she had every reason to believe Agnes warmly attached to her interest, it was a mystery she had never been anxious to have solved. The violent agitation into which her mind had been thrown during the former visit of Hernandez, had occasioned his mention of the key to escape her notice, consequently his attempt to remind her of the circumstance created her surprise. The sight of this key, now left in her possession, inspired her with new hopes—yet, on reflection, these hopes faded away. She felt too well assured that Hernandez would not have granted her this indulgence, had he not known that, should she wander to the utmost boundaries of the spacious confines, she would only be the more convinced of the impossibility of escaping.

The

The painful reflections of Rosalia were soon interrupted by the entrance of Pedro, who came to prepare the table for dinner. To conceal her too visible distress from the observation of this man, she immediately withdrew to her chamber, from whence Agnes was softly summoned by the voice of her cousin.

“ Pedro bade me inform you, Senora,” said Agnes, on returning to Rosalia, “ that dinner is ready. But oh, dear Senora,” continued she, in a tone of great joy, “ how lucky you are ! He has been telling me that the Senor has given you the key of the little Gothic door in the black marble hall, and so now you may go out when you please. Well, now surely, Senora, we shall find a way to get off, without going again into that terrible old tower.”

Rosalia sighed at the little prospect either alternative presented of success in such an enterprise ; but Agnes, who dreaded nothing so much as the thought of a second visit to the place she had mentioned, and

who, naturally concluding that should there be any way to escape, it was more likely to be discovered without than withinside the castle, continued to importune her lady to avail herself of the liberty Don Hernandez had allowed, until Rosalia at length intimated that she would, in the evening, walk out on the rocks.

The intervening hours had passed away, and the impatient Agnes no sooner beheld the sun retiring in the west, than she reminded her lady of her promise. Rosalia threw on her veil, and, followed by her delighted attendant, descended into the marble hall.

The Gothic door was quickly perceived, and having unlocked it, Rosalia found that it opened into a path, shaded by high elms. This path she entered, and having with difficulty forced her way through the entangled underwood that impeded her steps, she ascended a ridge of lofty rocks. These rocks, she perceived, ran along from that side of the castle in which her apartments were

were situated, and formed one tremendous height of a narrow defile, through which a rapid torrent rolled its swiftly dashing waters into the sea, which part of the rocks overhung, and formed a kind of high wall on one side the elm grove, while on the other, the castle walls extending to the water edge, joined the ponderous chain of rocks; and thus a considerable extent of ground was inclosed by insurmountable barriers.

“ Ah,” thought Rosalia, as she surveyed the surrounding scenery, “ how just is the conjecture I formed! Don Hernandez may indeed permit me to wander here, without feeling any apprehension of my regaining the liberty he has so basely deprived me of.”

Turning her eyes towards the castle, she perceived it was erected on an irregular chain of rocks. The south wing, rising above the other parts of the edifice, was defended from hostile attacks by the almost perpendicular precipice which it over-

looked, and sheltered from the northern gales by the lofty mountains, clothed almost to their summits with forests of pine, oak, fir, and chesnut. Above these appeared the highest points of the Pyrenees, white with eternal snows. On the east, the Mediterranean extended its wide waters; while, on the west, were seen forests of pine, evergreen oak, fir, and beech, varied by wild and craggy masses of marble and granite, from whose cleft sides hung the mountain ash, mingling its pendant branches with those of the birch, and the various beautiful shrubs that added their fragrant perfume to the passing gale. High on the pointed rock, the timid chamois culled the sweet herbage, and with attentive ear caught the faintest sound that floated on the air, and starting at the moaning breeze, sprung from the lofty precipices into the inaccessible valley, where foaming torrents roared, and where no hardy hunter durst pursue.

Rosalia turned from the sublime scenery, and stood on the cliff, sorrowfully contemplating

plating the white waves of the Mediterranean. Tears of anguish wetted her cheek as she thought of her beloved friends, of Italy, whose rich luxuriant shores so oft received the beating surges she now viewed with so much agony.

Dispirited and sad, she returned to the castle, and, in the solitude of her chamber, yielded to the grief that rent her heart.

CHAP. X.

ON the never-to-be-forgotten evening on which the hapless Rosalia was torn from her affectionate relatives, from tranquil happiness, and from promised nuptial felicity, the Marchese and the Countess Alvania, being engaged in conversation, neither of them heeded the lapse of time, till the darkening shades of approaching night reminded each of the lengthened absence of the Duke and his lovely sister. A domestic was then dispatched by the Marchese, to hasten their return; but as neither Vivonio nor Rosalia appeared so soon

soon as was expected, the Marchese, accompanied by Ferdinand, who had just returned from a visit, proceeded leisurely towards the cliff; expecting, at every step they took, to see those loved and esteemed objects they had walked out to meet advancing towards the villa. Having ascended the height, however, without encountering the Duke and Rosalia, the Marchese and Ferdinand entered the rustic bower, where, it had been supposed, the beauty of the evening had tempted them to linger. Surprised at not finding them there, the Marchese called on the names of his children, and was answered by a faint groan, followed by inarticulate sounds, that seemed to ascend from the lower part of the cliff. Struck with horror and dismay, the Marchese hurried down towards the base of the rocks; while Ferdinand, whose ear also had caught the indistinct murmurings, darted with rapidity to the spot from whence they appeared to issue; but what was his astonishment when he beheld Nicoli, one

of the attendants of the Marchese, fast bound to a tree! Before Ferdinand had time to utter a word, the man, who seemed nearly expiring under the tight pressure of the cords with which he was bound, faintly articulated—"My Lord—the Duke—down the rock."—Ferdinand, shocked beyond description at an intimation which implied some dreadful evil had befallen his friend, could stay to hear no more; he rushed down the steep, and turning an abrupt angle of the rock, saw, at a few paces distant, the Duke in a situation similar to that in which he had seen Nicoli. Grieved and enraged at the sight, a moment brought Ferdinand to the side of the apparently insensible Vivonio, whose release he quickly effected, by cutting asunder the cords with his sword. By this time the Marchese had reached the spot. Having taken a more direct course than that Ferdinand had pursued, he had not seen Nicoli, therefore had not been forewarned of the calamitous event, of which he was now an agonized witness.

witness. Inured as Di Romanzini was to misfortune, it required no common exertion of manly fortitude to support the present trial. For a moment the alarming state in which he beheld his son solely occupied his afflicted mind ; but when that moment had elapsed, his anxious eyes wandered around in search of his Rosalia, his darling Rosalia—his trembling lips, obeying the sad presages of his heart, repeatedly called on her loved name. Ferdinand needed not to be thus reminded of the absence of his lovely cousin : he had missed her from the moment in which he had discovered the Duke, and, almost frantic with terror on her account, he had no sooner committed Vivonio to the care of the half-distracted Marchese, than he flew back to the spot where Nicoli remained, and having with anxious haste released him from his bonds, he enquired of him what had become of Rosalia ? The man, who now began to breathe freely, briefly informed him that she had been forcibly carried off by the

Moors. The shock this intelligence gave Ferdinand was dreadful. When he regained the power of speech, he ordered Nicoli to hasten with all the speed he could to the villa, and to dispatch assistance from thence to convey the Duke home.

Ferdinand, now but too well convinced that no search could recover the lovely unfortunate, returned in despondency to the Marchese, whom he found sitting on the damp rock, endeavouring to recall his son to sensibility, while he made the cliff re-echo with the name of his Rosalia.

“ Arise, my Lord,” said Ferdinand in a tremulous voice, “ arise, I beseech you, and let me support my friend. Assistance will soon be here, and when the domestics arrive——”

Ferdinand was unable to proceed. He trembled to create false hopes, and he durst not venture to reveal the fatal truth.

A deep-drawn sigh, which now issued from the lips of the Duke, gave an assurance of reviving sense, and in a few seconds he
opened

opened his eyes. The Marchese still supported him ; but unconscious of any one being present, except Ferdinand, who stood bending over him, he gazed wildly around, and, in feeble accents, pronounced the name of Rosalia ; then, in a more audible tone, he continued—" She is gone ! for ever gone !—my sister, my dear Rosalia !—those execrable Moors !—"

The cold damps of death bedewed the forehead of the Marchese, while chilling horror crept through his every nerve at these expressions ; they were not the ravings of disordered intellect. Rosalia was missing—Vivonio had accompanied her walk—he best knew what had befallen her—the state too in which he had been found—all, all brought horrible conviction to the heart of the truly wretched parent. Sensible only to a loss so irreparable to him, and so dreadful in its consequences to the unhappy captive, the despairing Di Romanzini sat, immoveably fixed to the spot ; and when the attendants arrived, they found him in

as much need of their assistance as was the Duke. In a torpor that had benumbed all the active faculties of his soul, the Marchese, unresistingly, suffered himself to be supported to the villa, whither the affrighted and equally grieved domestics also conveyed their young Lord.

The Countess, happening to be in her dressing-room at the moment when Nicoli reached the villa, it was some time before she heard of the alarming errand he came on. When at length informed of the circumstance, and also that Rosalia was missing, in the midst of her confusion and terror, she was on the point of hastening towards the cliff, when she was prevented by the entrance of the mournful train into the hall.

The Duke was immediately conveyed to his own apartments, and messengers were dispatched to summon medical assistance; while the Marchese, apparently unconscious of all that passed around him, was led into the saloon.

From

From the lamenting Ferdinand, the Countess now learned the full extent of her revered friend's misfortunes. The Moors were known to make frequent incursions on the coasts, and the fate of Rosalia could no longer be doubted.

The voice of the Countess, in broken accents, pathetically repeating the name of her dear Rosalia, the sight of her fast flowing tears, operated on the mind of the Marchese. He gazed awhile on her, his sensibility revived, and at length bursting into an agony of tears, he exclaimed—
“Oh Rosalia! loved, lost Rosalia! my child, my child!”

For a considerable time the unhappy parent continued to give vent to the sorrows of his heavily oppressed heart in tears of bitterness. The Countess and Ferdinand participated his griefs; but neither could afford him consolation. The latter, however, remained but a few moments with the Marchese; he flew back to the chamber of the Duke, whose anxious solicitude
respecting

respecting his afflicted father had occasioned Ferdinand to quit the couch of his youthful friend.

The recollection of his son's situation had no sooner occurred to the Marchese, than his sufferings seemed more than he had power to bear. Already bereft of one fondly beloved child, and that too in so dreadful a manner, how could he support the agonizing apprehensions he now felt for the life of the other? Reflection could only produce distraction. He sought the chamber of Vivonio: he wept over his son, whose languid eyes were raised to the pale agitated countenance of his almost heart-broken father, while in feeble, yet persuasive accents, he besought him to suppress that agony of grief, of which he was himself a full partaker.

At length the medical practitioners arrived, and being conducted to the chamber of the Duke, the opinion they afterwards gave of the patient relieved the unhappy Di Romanzini of one part of his sorrows.

His

His son, he now learned, though severely bruised, principally on the head, and otherwise greatly hurt on the body, which latter injuries appeared to have been chiefly occasioned by the struggling exertions he had made to get free from the straitly confined state he had been held in, yet not one of these injuries could eventually affect his life.

Notwithstanding this consolatory assurance, the wretched Marchese could not think of the loss of his dear Rosalia, without falling into a state bordering on gloomy distraction. While Vivonio forgot his own sorrows in slumbers, procured by soporific potions, his unhappy parent wandered out, and traversed the rocks. There his Rosalia had been taken from him, and there, in heart-rending accents, he called on her name; then returned to the chamber of his son, and in speechless agony wept beside his couch.

At the dawn of day, Ferdinand dispatched a messenger with a few lines to the Count

Guidoni, at Naples, requesting his speedy appearance at the villa. In less than due time the messenger returned, with intelligence that the Count had neither been summoned by, nor had he of late been at the apartments of the friend he was supposed to have visited.

This extraordinary information, while it increased the distress of Ferdinand, excited proportionate degrees of alarm and wonder. A thousand fearful conjectures were now formed respecting what had become of the Count; and while they concealed the mysterious circumstance from the Marchese and his son, whose severe afflictions forbade the alarming communication, the Countess and Ferdinand caused hourly and repeated enquiries to be made; but all their attempts to trace the Count proved ineffectual.

The city of Naples now rung with the new misfortunes which had assailed the tranquillity of the Di Romanzini family. Every one wondered at the late circumstances; while

while the whole of the fashionable circles sincerely deplored the unwearied succession of unfortunate occurrences, by which the happiness of a family so amiable had been so singularly and so repeatedly undermined. Rosalia was the object of universal regret amongst those who had beheld her, and many of the principal nobility aided the Countess and her son in sending offers of the most splendid ransom to the respective piratical states of Barbary, whither it was generally imagined the beautiful and hapless Rosalia had been conveyed.

Meanwhile the Count Guidoni remained unheard of, a circumstance which encreased the sufferings of the Marchese and his son, to both of whom his absence appeared as extraordinary as it was painful to their feelings.

The measures which were now in agitation to obtain the emancipation of Rosalia, were, prior to their commencement, communicated to her sorrowing relatives, notwithstanding which the dreadful uncertainty of
of

of ever more beholding her, joined to the extreme inquietude caused by the total disappearance of the Count Guidoni, kept the mind of both the Marchese and his son in such violent and continual perturbation, as considerably retarded the recovery of the latter, and so materially affected the health of the former, that it was fearfully apprehended he could not survive the year.

General distress and incertitude still pervaded the inmates of the villa, when intelligence arrived that the Spanish vessel, on board which the Count Alvania and suite had embarked for Italy, had foundered at sea, and that every person on board had perished.

Thus every day seemed to bring some new calamity. The Countess and Ferdinand, though overwhelmed with the sorrow which each severely experienced at the melancholy end of the husband and the father, yet neither of them abated in their soothing attentions to the unfortunate Di Romanzini,

Romanzini, and his equally unhappy son, both of whom, while sincerely sympathising in the griefs of these generous friends, felt the warmest gratitude for the proofs hourly received of their disinterested kindness.

CHAP. XI.

WHILE the beloved relatives and friends of Rosalia were absorbed in grief and anxiety, she was still counting the tedious hours of imprisonment within the Castle de Riverra.

Three days, from that on which Hernandez departed, had now elapsed, and yet Rosalia, irresolute and yielding to terror, had made no further effort to visit the
south

south tower. From this state, however, she was suddenly aroused by the unexpected return of Don Hernandez. Pedro had intimated that his Lord would be absent for the space of a week ; but the impatience of the latter to see his lovely intended victim again, caused him to shorten his stay at the castle of his friend. In less than an hour after his arrival at Riverra, he presented himself before Rosalia.

Her pale looks, the air of dejection that appeared in her countenance and figure, seemed to shock Hernandez. Suppressing his emotion, however, he began the most tender enquiries respecting her health ; then proceeded to inform her that he was in hourly expectation of hearing from the Lady Abbess of a convent of Ursuline Nuns, where, he hoped, she would in a few days find an agreeable retreat.

Rosalia heard him with downcast eyes, and ill concealed disgust and abhorrence. Hernandez quickly perceived the distrust she entertained, yet, fearing to betray the
unworthy

unworthy rage and vexation that began to swell his bosom, he hastily withdrew, to the great relief of Rosalia, who, during his stay, had been often nigh sinking under the painful efforts she made to hide her real feelings.

In tears she now retired to her chamber, where Agnes had remained during the visit of Hernandez. While busying herself about the room, the girl had met with the roll of paper Rosalia had found in the tower apartment, and which, in her alarms, having thrown aside, had afterwards thought no more of. This was, however, another terrifying object to Agnes, who, supposing it to be the property of the ghost, no sooner saw her lady enter, than she exclaimed—

“ Dear, dear Senora, look here !” pointing to the cause of her present fears, which lay on the floor, whereto, in her fright, she had let it fall, “ look at that thing ; you took it, Senora, you took it from the haunted room, and, mercy on us ! its a
thousand

thousand to one but the ghost will come here to claim her own."

The heart of Rosalia was too full to allow her to pay any attention to the expressions of her simple attendant. Her eyes, still suffused with tears, were involuntarily attracted by the roll of paper.—"Ah!" mentally exclaimed she, while surveying it, "that scroll probably contains the sad story of some unfortunate, more wretched even than myself."

Having intimated to Agnes that she wished to be alone, the girl withdrew. Rosalia then took up the papers, and, after shaking off the dust and cobwebs that adhered to the outside and edges, she slowly proceeded to unfold them.

She now perceived that the roll consisted of several sheets, in the form of a manuscript. The writing, on the first, appeared in several places indistinct. Turning over to where the characters were more legible, she soon found, to her astonishment, that they were familiar to her eye. Eagerly
perusing

perusing a few lines, with breathless amazement she discovered that they had been written by Donna Victoria de Avilla, the unfortunate wife of Don Alphonso de Avilla, now Father Albertini, and the mother of her beloved friend Josephine !

The damp papers now fell from the trembling hand of Rosalia. What a scene of unparalleled villainy did this manuscript unfold ! There could be no doubt but that Don Hernandez de Marino, and the Don Felix de Romna, so often mentioned in the scroll found in the casket, were identically the same.

“ Oh this man ! this wretched, lost being ! ” exclaimed the shuddering Rosalia, “ how evident that from his earliest years he has been devoted to vices most abhorrent ! ”

Again she fearfully raised the manuscript, and read several passages—paused awhile—then resumed, until she had perused the whole. She now perceived it was merely a detail of events, independent of the incidents

dents that had occurred in the castle—pathetic advice to her young Josephine—instructions for her conduct through life—and solemn and repeated cautions to avoid falling into those errors of the heart and judgment, which had been the source of anguish to her mother—which, having too fatally yielded to, had ultimately ruined her peace, and substituted unavailing remorse and keen self-accusation, in the place of calm serenity and devout hope, with which she might have ended her days, in the sacred retreat from which she had so unhappily flown.

Rosalia wept as her eyes traced these mournful passages. Alarm and indignation, however, soon checked her tears. The manuscript having been found in the south tower, was an unquestionable proof that the hapless Victoria had once occupied those apartments; and that she had resided there after the Count Alvanio had disposed of the castle to Hernandez, appeared from another equally positive proof, which was the

the date she had affixed beneath the conclusion of the last page. In the latter circumstance, Rosalia could not be mistaken; she had repeatedly heard the Countess mention the exact period at which the castle was disposed of, and the manuscript appeared to have been written at a later one. Shocked, as Rosalia was, at finding these convincing proofs of the villainy of Hernandez, yet she could not avoid considering the having found the manuscript as a most fortunate circumstance. Victoria had assuredly been confined in the south tower; there, and there only, could she have discovered the way by which she had effected her escape. Rosalia also had discovered there a flight of steps, which, no doubt, led from thence into the vaults, and it was equally probable that these vaults extended beyond the castle walls. This conjecture imparted the liveliest hope to Rosalia, and the terrors of the south tower were for awhile forgotten; yet, when the appalling figure she had

beheld there occurred to her recollection, these terrors returned, and threw a damp on her spirits. To attempt an exploration of the subterranean passages and vaults, to which these steps certainly led, appeared, however, on reflection, the only expedient that presented the faintest prospect of regaining her liberty: the undertaking was awful and hazardous, yet when compared with the dreadful alternative—that of continuing in the power of Hernandez—all fear of supernatural beings yielded to the horror which this idea excited.

“ Yes, I will encounter every alarm!— I will face every danger!” mentally exclaimed Rosalia.—“ Secure in innocence, and ever beneath the guardian eye of Omnipotence, wherefore should I fear? Oh, Father!” she devoutly ejaculated, “ endue my heart with firm dependence on thy gracious protection—inspire my soul with virtuous fortitude, and suffer not the weak timidity that agitates my frame to enervate my mind!”

With

With a fixed reliance on Heaven, and reanimated spirits, Rosalia now began to indulge the rapturous hope of again beholding her beloved father, her brother, her Guidoni, the venerable Santa Clara, the Countess, Josephine, and all the sweet companions of her happy, early days. Vivid fancy pictured the transporting scene, when, once more on her native shores, she should be clasped to those hearts, which had ever beat with such love and esteem for her—when wiping the tears of anguish from their eyes, she should offer up her grateful thanks to that Divine Power who had restored her to all she held most dear on earth. Till this moment, Rosalia had not dared to dwell on the sorrows of those dear objects: sensibly feeling the peculiar necessity of exerting fortitude under her own distresses, she had sedulously avoided indulging all such contemplations as were likely to weaken the powers of her mind; when, therefore, the loved image of Guidoni, his agony at her loss, the heartfelt woe of

the Marchese, the rage and grief of Vivonio, and the distress of all to whom she was dear—when these agonizing images crowded to her thoughts, she had constant recourse to prayer. But now that hope illumined the dark scene, she dwelt with rapture on the future, and felt her mind rise superior to visionary terrors, and capable of enduring every hardship, encountering every danger, to realize the enchanting vision.

Being now determined on venturing again into the south tower, at the still hour of night, she began to consider whether it would be prudent to permit Agnes to attend her thither—a few moments decided that point: the frights and tremors of the girl, she apprehended, might impede her proceedings, therefore resolved to go alone; should she so far succeed in her attempts as to discover any opening by which she might escape, it was her intention to bid adieu to her dreary prison on the following night; and, making Agnes the companion
of

of her flight, trust in the protection of Heaven, to bear them through the difficulties and perils which two helpless females, wandering they knew not whither, were but too likely to meet with. Steadfast in her resolves, Rosalia seemed every moment to acquire new fortitude; and when Agnes, with timid voice, summoned her to the apartment where supper was laid, she entered the room, with an air so dissimilar to that which she usually wore, that her simple attendant stood gazing on her with surprise. This, however, passed unnoticed by Rosalia, who, though but little inclined to eat, sat down at the table, and, thinking refreshment necessary to invigorate her frame for the execution of her project, forced herself to taste of the delicacies with which it was spread, while Agnes, who had often seen her lady appear much more composed after her hours of devotion, than she had previously been, began to believe that the patron saint of Rosalia had now given her some assurance of a speedy re-

lease from the castle, which had caused the alteration she had observed in her manner—an idea, in all respects, delightful to the poor girl.

Soon after supper Rosalia retired, and, as was her custom, entered the oratory. Agnes, who had never been permitted by her lady to wait the conclusion of her evening devotions, now repaired to her couch, and quickly yielding to the influence of sleep, left Rosalia at liberty to prosecute her design.

At the foot of the altar she continued, in pious supplication, until the deep-toned clock proclaimed the midnight hour; then, having again commended herself to the protection of Heaven and the holy saints, she arose, threw on her veil, which she had brought thither, and, lighting a lamp that stood near the altar, pressed softly through the chamber, without disturbing the sleeping Agnes, and quickly gained the corridor.

The night was still and heavy—no sound
was

was heard, save the hoarse thunder of the wide cataract, that foamed through the deep defile, at the foot of the south wing. The silent prayer still hovered on the lips of Rosalia, as, with swift and soundless steps, she hurried along the corridor towards the entrance of the tower, which having reached, her rising fears were immediately lost in disappointment—she had forgot the key. It was now impossible to proceed, without first seeking for the bunch of rusty keys, which Agnes had, on the morning following the night on which the first attempt was made, replaced in the closet, from whence they had been taken.

Rosalia paused a moment, irresolute ; it was, however, but the irresolution of a moment, and she was on the point of hastening to the purple chamber, when, casting another glance at the door of the tower, she perceived it to be a little ajar. Startled at this circumstance, she hesitated anew.—“ Was it possible any person had already entered.”—The idea seemed absurd,

and was instantly dismissed. She now concluded, that in the extreme terror that overwhelmed her, and her hurry when quitting the tower, she had failed in her attempt to fasten it; this conjecture was reasonable, especially as she recollected that the door had been opened with difficulty. Her hesitation vanished; she threw open the door, and entered on the wide landing-place; trembling she stopped to look over the dark oak balustrades—all beneath was silent and obscure. She turned to the door of the middle chamber—it remained open as she had left it; this confirmed her in the idea of having left the former one in the unclosed state in which she found it.

At the entrance of the chamber she paused; its mournful aspect now struck her with terror—she stood in breathless expectation—a dreadful idea fled across her mind—the imagination that the shade of the unhappy Victoria wandered in these gloomy chambers, once her prison, chilled the heart of Rosalia. Her thoughts recurring

ring to the mysterious figure she had beheld there, she fearfully glanced her eyes around, expecting every instant they would encounter the shadowy form of the poor persecuted victim, gliding through the dim obscurity of the apartment; no object of alarm appearing, however, the trembling Rosalia, while faintly uttering a devout ejaculation, slowly advanced.

The pale melancholy beams of a declining moon, obliquely darting through the casement, threw a partial light on the once glittering hangings of the bed, which, with the dull glare of the lamp borne by Rosalia, served only to add to the solemn sadness of all around.

Having reached the steps on which the bed stood, she once again paused—she listened; the roaring of the cataract alone assailed her ear. The division in the front of the step remained as she had left it; with cautious hand she raised that part of the upper board which lay over the stone steps, and, looking down the dark abyss, shuddered.

shuddered at the black obscurity that pervaded all beneath.

The anxious wish of exploring these dismal regions, was again forcibly checked by the dread of unknown perils. For some moments she felt half-inclined to return to her own apartments, and bring Agnes from thence, that she might accompany her; but the recollection of having no right to expose a fellow-creature to those horrors and dangers, which she might encounter in her subterraneous researches, effectually deterred Rosalia from taking such a step.

While she stood irresolute, several minutes elapsed: at length the idea occurring that, if she should let the present opportunity pass, it was more than probable she might never gain another, she endeavoured to summon courage, and, having once more fervently commended herself to the protection of Heaven, she tremblingly descended several long flights of narrow stone steps, which terminated in an equally

narrow passage. This she passed through; and found herself in another, the windings of which she followed, and at length, reaching the extremity, perceived an iron door, which opened into a wide and lofty vault: the door being unclosed, Rosalia had no difficulty in gaining admission, and here she observed the air was neither so confined or damp, as might have been expected. The lamp continued to burn steadily, as, with beating heart, she glided across this vault, and proceeded into another adjoining the former. Raising the lamp to look around this vault, she perceived two long arcades, one branching off from the right, the other from the left. After standing awhile, undetermined which to chuse, she at length entered the one on the right, and having proceeded along this arcade, which seemed to be of uncommon length, she perceived a strong iron door that terminated its extent. To her great joy, Rosalia found this door also open; she hastily passed, and entered a passage of narrower

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dimensions.

dimensions than any she had yet gone through. At the extremity of this passage appeared a rude opening, apparently caused by a large piece of rock having fallen aside; beyond this narrow opening, all was dark and silent. Rosalia stepped forward, and, extending the lamp, endeavoured to discover whither this cleft in the rock led; but the beams of her light, contracting in the surrounding darkness, afforded no view of any object. A fearful hesitation now checked her steps; she trembled at the idea of entering the gloomy undistinguishable waste, yet shrunk from that of returning.

Again she threw an anxious glance around, but misty obscurity still met her eye. At length she lowered the lamp towards the spot on which she stood, and perceived that the place she dreaded to enter was paved with large flags of grey stone. This sight revived her courage and her hopes, and she ventured to proceed: her light footsteps sounding on the pavement,

ment, were returned in hollow echoes ; she paused, fearful lest she was pursued—while she stopped, the alarming sounds ceased. Rosalia, now half smiling at her own causeless terror, stood gazing around her, and perceived that she had entered what appeared to be an uncommonly spacious but circular cavern ; the dim rays of her lamp, faintly falling on the dark outline, rendered the surrounding objects barely visible. She trimmed the feeble light, and now distinguished a considerable number of small cells excavated in the dark grey rock. With palpitating heart she traversed the gloomy cavern ; it appeared to be entirely surrounded with cells. This circumstance, and several small crosses formed of marble and granite, which she observed here and there, almost convinced Rosalia that she had now discovered the caverns of San Stephano.

With mingled awe and hope she examined several of the cells, in some of which she perceived the mouldering remains of very antique and simple furniture ;

but

but what most engaged her attention, and fully confirmed her in the idea she had formed of the place, was an excavation in the rock, of a size much larger than that of any of the cells, and which evidently appeared to have been used as a chapel. Above an altar of granite, was placed a large marble crucifix, and there still remained many of the lamps which once had burned before the crucifix and the holy shrine.

No longer doubting, Rosalia placed her lamp on the altar, at the foot of which she now devoutly knelt, and there, with all the fervour of true piety, breathed forth the grateful effusions of her heart, to that Benignant Power who had graciously vouchsafed to lead her thus far in safety.

Whilst thus piously employed, she was on a sudden struck with strains of exquisite music echoing through the cavern; entranced with amazement and awe, she continued kneeling. A plaintive solo was now heard; the pathetic sweetness of the tones,

tones, swelling the full note of harmony, and then gently breathing the expressive cadence, were however soon lost amidst the full chorus that succeeded. The lofty strains affected the heart of Rosalia with emotions undescribable.

The music at length ceased; but the mind of Rosalia still retained the sweet influence of the seraphic strains.

“ Ah, surely,” she thought, “ those heavenly tones proceeded from the spirits of departed saints, whose ærial forms are permitted to revisit these sacred caverns, which have so often resounded with their notes of praise, whilst just inhabitants of the earth.”

This idea, which had impressed her with reverential awe, was quickly however succeeded by one that thrilled the bosom of Rosalia with ecstatic hope: she now imagined that the melodious voices she had just heard, were probably those of a holy society of nuns, belonging to some lonely convent situated on the mountains; there might possibly
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be some subterraneous passage leading from some religious house to these caverns.—“ Ah, it must be so !” exclaimed Rosalia, —“ the pious sisterhood have assembled in these sacred retreats, to commemorate the residence of those holy bands, who here found that safety and peace, which the ravages and cruelty of the infidels had banished from their mourning country.”

Inspired with renovated hope, she arose and walked towards that part of the cavern from whence the sounds had seemed to proceed. After wandering about for some time, without perceiving any opening, except the one at which she had entered, she began to imagine all further search would be equally vain with the former, when, as she again slowly moved around, she descried a narrow division between two cells, the entrances to which lay far back in the rock, and were partly obscured by the prominence of the adjoining ones.

On examining this opening, she was astonished to find it much wider than at
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the first view she could have supposed, and that it gave admittance to what appeared a passage obliquely cut in this part of the rock.

Delighted with this new discovery, and persuading herself that, as the enchanting sounds had without doubt issued through this opening, the holy sisterhood, amongst whom she might hope to find sanctuary, were not far distant, she entered, and proceeded along the passage, which was but short, and widening gradually, was terminated by a door strongly plated with iron.

To the infinite joy of Rosalia, she perceived, as she advanced, a faint stream of light reflected on the wall at the extremity of the passage, which could issue only from the cavern beyond the door she was now hastily approaching, and which, while it assured her that this door was unclosed, apparently realized the hopes she entertained of finding the pious sisterhood within.

In her excessive eagerness to gain admittance,

mittance, she hastily threw open the door ; but what a sight was here presented to her astonished view ! How different was the place she now beheld, from the cavern she had just quitted ! that was dark and gloomy —this was brilliantly illuminated with silver lamps !—A corridor, supported by pillars of granite, and adorned with a balustrade of gilt bronze, ran entirely round the place, which was of a circular form ; the ground was a beautiful mosaic, and, in the center, a fountain reared its sparkling column ; in several parts of the wall, which was smooth and polished, Rosalia observed narrow apertures, which had been cut through the rock, evidently for the purpose of admitting air ; two flights of steps led up to the corridor.

Rosalia gazed in wonder on this singular scene ! The ideas she had indulged, whilst in the interior cavern, now vanished. The hope of finding protection amongst the votaries of religion, could no longer be entertained ; for it was evident that the hand of *Piety* had not thus adorned this cavern.

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The only supposition that now occurred to the amazed Rosalia was, that some noble Spanish family had here sought a retreat from the resentment of offended Majesty—and thus, concealed within the deep caverns of the earth, gratified that love of splendour they could no longer indulge amidst society.

Rosalia raised her eyes towards the corridor, and, by the light of the silver lamps that were suspended between the pillars, perceived several doors that opened on it: she felt inclined to explore this singularly adorned retreat. A profound silence, unbroken but by the waters of the fountain falling into the marble bason, reigned around.

“Should I,” she mentally exclaimed, “intrude on the privacy of the inhabitants of this cavern, surely a communication of the peculiarly unhappy circumstances I am in, will entitle me to their pardon and assistance: by their aid I may, possibly, be enabled to fly from the power of the base

Hernandez;

Hernandez ; or should I not encounter any human being in my research, I may yet succeed in finding some outlet leading to the mountains."

Irresistibly impelled by these considerations, Rosalia ascended the steps to the corridor; the doors, she observed, were all closed. As she passed along, she listened attentively at each, but no sound proceeded from within ; with trembling hand, she at length tried to open one of the doors—it yielded to the slightest attempt, and she entered a small chamber, furnished in a superb style : The stone walls were concealed by beautiful tapestry ; the room was spread with rich carpetting, and on each side was placed a low sofa ; over these appeared lofty canopies, the curtains of which, together with the coverings of the sofas, the cushions belonging to them, and those of the cushions that lay on the carpetting, were all of blue velvet, richly embroidered ; on a small table of green jasper, stood a silver tripod lamp, and above this table was
fastened

fastened a large, elegant mirror. While surveying this apartment, the astonishment of Rosalia was excessive; it appeared furnished in the Eastern style; and an idea that she had intruded on the retreat of some wealthy Moor, who here concealed himself from the power of the Inquisition, quickly occurring, converted her astonishment into alarm and terror.

A view of the adjoining rooms only was wanting to confirm or banish this fearful suspicion. Too confused and bewildered with these new apprehensions, to consider the propriety of proceeding, or the safety of immediate retreat, Rosalia thought only of the means likely to end her present state of suspense: yielding to the impulse of the moment, she hastily left the chamber, and proceeded to survey the others; each she now respectively looked in on, was furnished in a style perfectly correspondent with the first, and all her doubts were soon reduced to a most alarming certainty.

This examination over, she was hastening
down

down the stone steps, when the sound of voices assailed her ear: trembling, she paused—the voices grew louder—her terrors encreased—and, with redoubled speed, she flew down the steps; and while proceeding round the hall, with intent to gain the entrance, her eyes involuntarily glanced aside, and she beheld a wide-arched door, seemingly ajar, and which was so skilfully coloured, in imitation of the rocky wall, that, had it been closed, the deception had not been perceptible.

Fatally attracted by this object, the steps of Rosalia were now suspended. After a momentary pause, she drew nigh to the door, and, looking through the slight opening, perceived, in an apartment, which, for splendour, exceeded all she had yet beheld in the place, several men in rich Moorish habits, surrounded by a number of young females of exquisite beauty, and whose light meretricious garments but too plainly spoke their degradation. At the upper end of the room, on a seat rather more elevated

elevated than the rest, and beneath a canopy of rose-coloured satin, glittering with embroidery, sat a man who appeared to be the chief: he seemed to be listening attentively to a beautiful girl, whose composed attitude and serious countenance implied she was discoursing on some grave subject. While she spoke, a profound silence was observed by the rest of the party; but the distance at which she sat, precluded the possibility of Rosalia distinguishing what she said.

Rivettèd to the spot with astonishment, that suspended the power of reflection, Rosalia could not remove her eyes from the splendid subterraneous abode.

This cavern, which was of an oval form, and of vast dimensions, was hung all around with rose-coloured satin. The lofty roof, which appeared to have been hewn in a concave, was thickly studded with shining gems and spars, the resplendence of which was heightened by the blaze of innumerable chrystal lamps; while from the center
of

of the dome was suspended, by a gold chain, an immense lustre, the brilliant light of which added to the dazzling radiance of the scene. Around this apartment, on pedestals of green jasper, were respectively ranged white marble statues, and gilt vases, filled with exquisite perfumes.

A signal being on a sudden given by the chief, loud strains of music again resounded through the wide extended space. The young females instantly sprung up, and commenced a dance. This circumstance restored Rosalia to recollection. The danger of being discovered, and the imprudence she had already been guilty of in remaining, though but for a few moments, on the spot, now flashed on her mind. In her haste to retreat, the lamp fell from her trembling hand. She had no alternative but to continue a moment longer to relight it. In order, however, to reach one of the suspended lamps, she was compelled to re-ascend the steps of the corridor, and there, leaning over the low balustrade, she quickly
re-illumed

re-illumed her own. This done, she eagerly paced the hall towards the entrance; but ere she had reached it, the door she had just quitted was thrown open, and she caught a glimpse of the chief advancing. Terror gave incredible speed to her steps; she flew along till she had gained the interior cavern, and there she was overtaken by the Moor. Uttering a shriek of terror, she fell insensible on the cold pavement.

On recovering, she found herself supported by the Moor. Shuddering with horror, she attempted to break from his arms; but he held her too forcibly for her weak efforts to succeed.

“Your endeavours to fly me are vain,” he exclaimed in a voice which the terror-struck Rosalia instantly recognised to be that of Don Hernandez.—“The demon,” he continued, “that urges your silly sex to insatiable curiosity, has betrayed you in the indulgence of your favourite propensity; expect, therefore, nothing more from my weak affection; I have delayed too long in compassion to your prejudices.”

In frantic horror Rosalia burst from his arms ; but astonishment and indignation were quickly lost in a sense of her alarming situation. In the anguish of her heart she fell at his feet, and entreated his compassion.

Hernandez paused a moment. At length he said—" Arise, Lady Rosalia, arise ; I cannot see you thus ; I am still inclined to treat you with that respect your beauty and rank demand. Fortunately your intrusion is unknown to all but myself, and accident alone betrayed it to me. Consent, therefore, to bind yourself by the most sacred vows never to reveal what you have this night discovered, and I will then suffer you to quit these caverns. Refuse my request, and you instantly become, for life, an inmate of those apartments which you have had the temerity to explore. Do not hesitate, Rosalia ; if you tempt my rage, you will find that no power on earth can save you from the fate you have to dread."

The horror of the latter alternative admitted of no deliberation. Rosalia, scarcely conscious of what she did, assented to the tyrannical

tyrannical requisition, upon which Hernandez raised from the ground a silver tripod lamp, which he had brought with him, then led her towards the marble crucifix, before which she had but a short time past knelt in fervent prayer.

Rosalia trembled violently as she approached the sacred altar with this iniquitous man. Kneeling before the crucifix, she pronounced the tremendous vow he dictated, which for ever ensured her silence respecting the mysteries of the caverns, while her extreme emotion rendered her voice almost inarticulate.

Hernandez, at the conclusion, exultingly assisted her to rise, declaring that her compliance with his solemn adjuration had more than ever endeared her to him.

Enraged at the fear and disgust which he perceived in the pale countenance of his beautiful prisoner, he suddenly resumed his haughty air, and having relumed and presented to her her own lamp, which had been extinguished in her fall, he led her from the caverns.

While passing through one of the long passages, Hernandez suddenly paused, and regarding Rosalia with a penetrating look, he demanded how she had found her way to the caverns?

“Through an apartment in the south tower,” she replied.

“And how did you find entrance there, lady?”

Rosalia hesitated. Unwilling to expose Agnes to the rage of the infamous Hernandez, she determined not to acknowledge by what means she procured the key of the door that communicated with the corridor; therefore, after a momentary pause, during which Hernandez regarded her with impatient earnestness, she said—

“I do not consider myself under any obligation to reply to your interrogatories, Don Hernandez, and——”

“You have had an assistant then in this strange attempt to fly from my power?” interrupted Hernandez, in an agitated and hurried tone.

“My words did not imply that, my Lord.”

“Do

“ Do not trifle with me, lady,” angrily cried he. “ By what means did you enter that tower?”

“ I found the door of communication open,” returned Rosalia.

“ Open!” exclaimed Hernandez, while an air of sullen gloom and ferocity overspread his features—“ open! by Heaven, here is some treachery! This night, Lady Rosalia, you found that door unlocked?”

“ Even so.”

Hernandez enquired no further. Muttering a few unintelligible words, he led the way through the long passages, till he reached the first flight of stone steps; then motioning Rosalia to ascend, he followed her up into the chamber of the south tower.

In this apartment he paused. Rosalia had now a full view of his face, as he raised the lamp to look around him. So striking was the alteration in his appearance, that she gazed at him with encreasing astonishment. His complexion was considerably

darkened ; his eyebrows, which were naturally of a moderate size, and finely arched, were now of the deepest black, and remarkably wide. The large turban he wore concealed his hair ; and his dark fierce eyes were rendered more terrible by the deep tawney hue of his assumed complexion.

Rosalia, while regarding him, almost doubted whether she beheld Don Hernandez ; his voice had alone assured her of the fact. She observed that he appeared greatly agitated, as he glanced wildly around the desolate chamber, and that the livid whiteness of terror was visible through the deep shade which disguised his face.

“ Let us not linger here,” he suddenly exclaimed in a hurried tone, and immediately taking the hand of Rosalia, drew her from the apartment.

When they had reached the corridor of the black marble hall, Hernandez appeared to have recovered himself. Having conducted Rosalia to the entrance of her own apartments, he paused a moment, then desiring

siring her to remember the solemn vow she had just taken, suffered her to enter the room:

Rosalia heard him fasten the door of the antichamber on the outside; and his receding steps soon after faintly echoing in the distance, till the sounds were no longer heard, assured her that she was, for the present moment, freed from his detestable persecutions.

With trembling limbs Rosalia now crossed the antichamber, and with difficulty reached the bed-room. A death-like faintness pervaded her whole frame. While in the presence of Hernandez, the hurry of her spirits had supported her; but now the strong emotions of her mind could no longer be contended with, and she had scarcely passed by the couch, where lay the still sleeping Agnes, when she sunk upon the floor.

Waked by the sound of the fall, Agnes started up. A lamp that still burned in the chamber, shewed to the alarmed girl the senseless state of her lady. More terrified

at this sight than she had been at the noise, she flew to afford all the assistance in her power; but notwithstanding all her endeavours, Rosalia continued for a considerable time in a state of total insensibility. When at last she opened her languid eyes, she beheld the poor girl in an agony of grief and alarm, weeping over her. The tears, the affection, the tender enquiries of the artless Agnes, affected the heart of Rosalia. She leaned on the shoulder of the simple attendant; she beheld in her the only friend, that, in her present wretched state, she could confide her sorrows to, and the only one inclined to sympathize in them. This sad reflection caused the tears of Rosalia to flow, and the salutary drops eased her oppressed bosom.

“Oh, dear Senora,” sobbed Agnes, “what has happened to put you into this terrible illness? Have you seen the ghost? Oh I’m afraid, because you are dressed, that you have been in that shocking tower—Oh Senora, I am sure you have. Well, I think
my

my heart will break to think you shouldn't believe I loved you well enough to go along with you—the Virgin knows I would rather do any thing than see you in this sad way.”

Rosalia faintly intimated that she had indeed visited the tower, and that all hopes of escape were over; then, seriously commanding the girl to make no further enquiries, she prepared to retire, under pretence of seeking that repose which the dreadful occurrences of the night permitted her not to find.

The more she reflected on the horrors of her present situation, the more her alarm and grief increased. To have so unexpectedly discovered the atrocious secret proceedings of Hernandez, she knew would render him more than ever determined to detain her from her mourning family. That he was strongly enlinked with the Infidels, she had too fatally ascertained; and she felt that she had every thing to dread from a man who had fully proved himself a most consummate

consummate villain, and who, to judge from his associates, might justly be supposed an apostate to the religion he outwardly professed. She now deeply regretted the having delayed a moment in the subterraneous apartments; and in the bitterness of remorse she severely reproached herself with an unpardonable curiosity: nor could she feel reconciled to herself, when recollecting that her senses were at the time too confused and bewildered to allow her to reflect on the imprudence of the delay, a delay which had involved her in the dreadful necessity of binding herself to secrecy by a most tremendous vow, and finally placing her more certainly within the power of her vile persecutor.

END OF VOL. III.



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